SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1948

No.

RICHARD W. BROWN, PETITIONER,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA

ON PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

INDEX

		Original	Print
Proceedings in Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia		1	1
Bill of exceptions	(omitted in printing)	1	
Record from Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia		7	1
Petition		7	1
Demurrer		11	4
Order sustaining demurrer		11	4
Opinion of Court of Appeals		13	5
Judgment		19	8
Motion for rehearing	(omitted in printing)	20	
Order denying rehearing		31	9
Certiorari notice	(omitted in printing)	32	
Order of Supreme Court denying certiorari		35	9
Clerk's certificate	(omitted in printing)	36	
Stipulation as to record		37	10
Order allowing certiorari		37	11

[fols. 1-7]

IN SUPERIOR COURT OF FULTON COUNTY

PETITION—Filed January 20, 1948

Georgia, Fulton County

To The Superior Court of Said County:

The petition of Richard J. Brown, respectfully shows:

1. That the Western Railway of Alabama, hereinafter styled the defendant is a corporation organized under the laws of a State other than Georgia, but having an office, agent, and place of doing business in said State and County upon whom service or process may be had.

2. That defendant has injured and damaged petitioner in the sum of $5,000.00, by reason of the facts hereinafter stated.

3. That on or about the 25th day of August, 1947, petitioner was in the employ of Atlanta and West Point Railroad company and the defendant, Western Railway of Alabama as a brakeman on freight train No. 1, running from Atlanta to West Point, Georgia as an employee of the Atlanta and West Point Railroad Company, and from West Point, Georgia, through Opelika, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama as an employee of defendant, his duties as such requiring that he turn switches, give signals, apply and release hand brakes on cars, to couple, and uncouple cars and generally to assist in switching movements necessary to be made.

4. That on or about the 25th day of August, 1947, "petitioner while engaged in the employment aforesaid was injured as a result of the negligence of defendant when he slipped and fell on a large clinker lying beside the track in the switch yards at Opelika, Alabama, over which it was necessary for petitioner to cross in giving signals to his engineer" as appears more fully hereinafter.

5. Petitioner alleges that "the yards aforesaid are jointly operated by the defendant and the trustees of the Central [fol. 8] of Georgia Railway Company."

6. Petitioner alleges that "defendant had allowed clinkers, coal bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris to

collect in said yards along the side of the tracks and that it was necessary for petitioner, in the performance of his duties, to cross over all such material and debris."

7. Petitioner alleges that "it was the duty of the defendant to use reasonable and proper care to provide him a reasonably safe place in which to work in the course of his duties and employment."

8. That "the defendant did not regard its duties in this behalf to use reasonable and proper care to provide plaintiff a reasonably safe place in which to discharge his duties as aforesaid; but directed him to work in said yards at said time under the conditions above described."

9. Petitioner alleges that 'the debris aforesaid scattered along beside the tracks and over said yards at said point made yards unsafe for use by petitioner in the performance of his duties and that defendant thereby negligently failed to furnish petitioner a reasonably safe place in which to work by reason thereof."

10. On the date aforesaid, "petitioner while switching cars in the yards aforesaid, ran around the engine as his duties at said time required, to mount the top of cars being handled so that he could see the back end of the cut of cars and the engineer at the same time; and give the necessary signals for the switching movement there being made; and while in the performance of such duties as aforesaid he stepped on a large clinker lying beside the tracks as aforesaid which caused petitioner to fall and be injured in [fol. 9] the particulars hereinafter set out.

11. Thereafter, petitioner was carried to the Company physician in Opelika, Alabama, where his foot was X-rayed and the X-ray disclosed that the 5th metatorsal bone was broken and that it was necessary for foot to be placed in a cast.

12. Petitioner shows that the fifth metatorsal bone of his right foot was broken and that all the other bones, nerves, muscles, flesh, skin and tissues of his right foot were wrenched, strained, sprained and injured causing petitioner to suffer great physical and mental pain and agony.

13. That as a result of said injury and foot being placed in a cast petitioner was off work for thirty (30) days.

14. Petitioner further shows that on or about October 14th, due to great pain in his right foot, it was re-X-rayed which disclosed the break of the bone in his foot had never healed; that his foot was again placed in a cast and plaintiff was off from his work forty-seven (47) additional work days, making the total of work days lost on account of said injury seventy-eight (78).

15. Petitioner shows that prior to the accident, he was a strong, able-bodied man, earning the sum of $15.80 per day for his labors and that he lost 45 work days at this rate of pay; that there after a new rate of pay was substituted the same being $17.97, and that he lost 33 work days at the new rate of pay, making a total of $1304.01, lost on account of said injury.

16. Plaintiff alleges that his injuries aforesaid was directly and proximately caused in whole or in part by the negligence of the defendant in the particulars hereinafter set out:

[fol. 10] 17. The defendant was negligent:

(a) In failing to furnish plaintiff with a reasonably safe place in which to work as herein alleged.

(b) In leaving clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris along the side of track in its yards as aforesaid, well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakemen, working therein and that petitioner would have to perform his duties with said yards in such condition.

(c) In not removing clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris from its yards before assigning plaintiff to work therein at said time and place as herein alleged.

18. That at all times herein mentioned defendant was a common carrier by railroad engaged in the transportation of interstate commerce and the instrumentalities upon which plaintiff was working at said time and place were instrumentalities that were used in the furtherance of interstate commerce and the same were engaged in interstate commerce and plaintiff, at the time of his injuries, was engaged in interstate commerce.

Wherefore, plaintiff prays judgment against defendant in the full sum sued for and that process may issue directed

to defendant requiring it to be and appear in this Court on a day certain as is now provided by law to answer this complaint.

T. J. Lewis, Attorney for Plaintiff.

[File endorsement omitted.]

[fols. 11-12] In Superior Court of Fulton County

[Title omitted]

Demurrer—Filed February 3, 1948

Now comes the defendant in the above stated case and demurs to the petition filed therein and shows:

1. Said petition does not set forth a cause of action and is otherwise insufficient in law.

Wherefore, defendant asks that said petition be dismissed.

Heyman, Howell & Heyman, Defendant's attorneys.

[File endorsement omitted.]

In Superior Court of Fulton County

Order Sustaining Demurrer—June 1, 1948

Upon hearing, the foregoing demurrer is sustained and the above stated case is dismissed.

This June 1, 1948.

Walter C. Hendrix, Judge, Superior Court, Atlanta Circuit.

[fol. 13] IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA

32130

BROWN

v.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA

OPINION—

By the Court:

In an action brought under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (U. S. C. A. § 51 et seq.), where it appears from the allegations of the petition, when construed most strongly against the pleader, that the negligence which caused the injuries complained of was that of the employee who failed to notice and avoid a large clinker in the railroad yard, but instead stepped on the same and fell, and where the alleged facts fail to disclose any negligence on the part of the employer which caused or contributed to the alleged injury, the employer is not liable to such employee, and the trial court did not err in sustaining a general demurrer to the employee's petition and in dismissing the action.

Richard J. Brown sued Western Railway of Alabama in Fulton Superior Court for injuries sustained while in the employ of said company. The petition alleged substantially the following: The defendant railroad is a corporation having an office, agent, and place of doing business in Fulton County, and has injured and damaged petitioner in the sum of $5,000. The plaintiff was employed on or about August 25, 1947, by Atlanta and West Point Rail Road Company as a brakeman on freight train No. 1, running from Atlanta to West Point, and by Western Railway of Alabama, the defendant, on this same train while it was running from West Point, Georgia, through Opelika, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama. "Petitioner while engaged in the employment aforesaid was injured as a result of [fol. 14] the negligence of defendant when he slipped and fell on a large clinker lying beside the track in the switch yards of Opelika, Alabama, over which it was necessary for petitioner to cross in giving signals to his engineer . . . The yards aforesaid are jointly operated by the defendant and the trustees of the Central of Georgia Railway Company . . . Defendant had allowed clinkers, coal, bottles, tie

plates, trash, and other debris to collect in said yards along the side of the tracks and . . . it was necessary for petitioner, in the performance of his duties, to cross over such material and debris . . . It was the duty of defendant to use reasonable and proper care to provide him a reasonably safe place in which to work in the course of his duties and employment . . . The defendant did not regard its duties in this behalf to use reasonable and proper care to provide plaintiff a reasonably safe place in which to discharge his duties as aforesaid, but directed him to work in said yards at said time under the conditions above described . . . The debris aforesaid scattered along beside the tracks and over said yards at said time made [the] yards unsafe for use by petitioner in the performance of his duties, and . . . . defendant thereby negligently failed to furnish petitioner a reasonably safe place in which to work by reason thereof . . . Petitioner, while switching cars in the yards aforesaid, ran around the engine, as his duties at said time required, to mount the top of cars being handled so that he could see the back end of the cut of cars and the engineer at the same time and give the necessary signals for the switching movement there being made, and while in the performance of such duties as aforesaid, he stepped [fol. 15] on a large clinker lying beside the tracks as aforesaid, which caused petitioner to fall and be injured in the particulars hereinafter set out." The petition contains a description of the plaintiff's injuries and shows that a bone of his right foot was broken, which did not at first heal properly, with resulting pain and the loss of time from work. It is alleged that $1304.01 was lost in wages because of his inability to work as a result of the injuries. Negligence is charged to the defendant in the following particulars: "(a) In failing to furnish plaintiff with a reasonably safe place in which to work as herein alleged. (b) In leaving clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris along the side of track in its yards as aforesaid, well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakeman working therein and that petitioner would have to perform his duties with said yards in such condition. (c) In not removing clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris from its yards before assigning plaintiff to work therein at said time and place as herein alleged." The plaintiff shows that

he and the defendant were engaged in interstate commerce at the time of the accident.

The defendant filed a general demurrer to the petition. The case is here on exceptions to the order sustaining the general demurrer and dismissing the petition.

[fol. 16] SUTTON, C. J. (After stating the foregoing facts.):

This is an action in which recovery is sought for injuries sustained by an employee of a railroad company engaged in interstate commerce while such employee was engaged in the performance of his duties, and is controlled by the provisions of the Federal Employers' Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A. § 51 et seq. Although brought in a State court, all matters of substance are controlled by Federal law. Seaboard Air Line Railway v. Horton, 233 U. S. 492 (3) (34 Sup. Ct. 635, 58 L. ed. 1062, L. R. A. 1915C, 1 Ann. Cas. 1915B, 475); Central of Ga. Ry. Co. v. Goeus, 30 Ga. App. 770, 773 (119 S. E. 669); Southern Ry. Co. v. Bradshaw, 73 Ga. App. 438, 440 (37 S. E. 2d 150). "The act does not make the employer the insurer of the safety of his employees while they are on duty. The basis of his liability is his negligence, not the fact that injuries occur. And that negligence must be 'in whole or in part' the cause of the injury." Ellis v. Union Pacific R. Co., 329 U. S. 649 (67 Sup. Ct. 59, 91 L. ed. 576); Brady v. Southern Ry. Co., 320 U. S. 476, 484 (64 Sup. Ct. 232, 88 L. ed. 239); 45 U. S. C. A. § 51. Where the act or acts, or the failure to act, which resulted in the injury are the acts or omissions of the employee who is injured, and those acts or the failure to act constitute the negligence which brought about the injury, and there is no negligence on the part of the employer which caused or contributed to the injury, such employer is not liable therefor. McGivern v. Northern Pacific Ry. Co., 132 Fed. 2d 213 (11). Also see Frese v. Chicago, B. & Q. Ry. Co., 263 U. S. 1 (44 Sup. Ct. 1, 68 L. ed. 131); Atchison, T. & S. F. R. Co. v. Toops, 281 U. S. [fol. 17] 351 (50 Sup. Ct. 281, 71 L. ed. 896); Powell v. Waters, 55 Ga. App. 307 (190 S. E. 615); Tankersley v. Southern Ry. Co., 73 Ga. App. 88, 91 (35 S. E. 2d 522); Atlantic Coast Line R. Co. v. Anderson, 73 Ga. App. 343, 349 (36 S. E. 2d 435). Hence, it is of primary consideration whether the petition shows negligence on the part of the employer which is in whole or in part the cause of the injury, and in determining the sufficiency of the allegations of the petitioner in this respect on general demurrer to the petition, which admits only facts well pleaded, and not the

conclusions of the pleader, the allegations will be construed most strongly against the pleader. Stripped of its details, the petition shows that the plaintiff was injured while in the performance of his duties when he stepped on a large clinker lying alongside the track in the railroad yards. In the absence of allegations to the contrary, the inference arises that the plaintiff's vision was unobscured and that he could have seen and avoided the clinker. Although the presence of other debris in the yards is shown in the petition, it is not shown that this debris was in any way responsible for the accident. The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence. Furthermore, it is not shown how or for what length of time the clinker was in the yard, or wherein it rendered the yard unsafe for employees accustomed to work there. Insofar as the allegations of the petition show, the sole cause of the accident was the act of the plaintiff in stepping on this large clinker, which he was able to see and could have avoided. It was he who, without any outside inter-[fol. 18] vention, failed to look, stepped on the clinker, and fell. Under such circumstances, there is no question of negligence on the part of the defendant to present to a jury, and the trial court did not err in sustaining the general demurrer and in dismissing the action.

Careful consideration has been given to the briefs of counsel for the plaintiff in error, and the authorities there cited do not authorize or require a different ruling from the one herein made. The cases dealing with the abolition of the doctrine of assumption of risk in actions arising under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, and the effect of contributory negligence under the act, are necessarily predicated upon a showing of negligence on the part of the employer, and are inapplicable to the case at bar.

Judgment affirmed. Felton and Parker, JJ., concur.

[fols. 19-30] IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA

JUDGMENT—October 2, 1948

The Honorable Court of Appeals met pursuant to adjournment.

The following judgment was rendered: R. J. Brown v. Western Railway of Alabama. This case came before this

court upon a writ of error from the Superior Court of Fulton county; and, after argument had, it is considered and adjudged that the judgment of the court below be affirmed.

Sutton, Felton and Parker, JJ., concur.

[fols. 31-34] IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF GEORGIA

ORDER DENYING REHEARING—October 22, 1948

The Honorable Court of Appeals met pursuant to adjournment.

The following order was passed: R. J. Brown v. Western Railway of Alabama. Upon consideration of the motion for a rehearing filed in this case, it is ordered that it be hereby denied.

[fols. 35-36] IN THE SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

ORDER DENYING CERTIORARI—January 12, 1949

The Honorable Supreme Court met pursuant to adjournment. The following judgment was rendered:

Richard J. Brown v. Western Railway of Alabama.

Upon consideration of the application for certiorari filed to review the judgment of the Court of Appeals in this case, it is ordered that the writ be hereby denied. All the Justices concur.

Bill of Costs, $15.00.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA,
Clerk's Office, Atlanta:

Jan. 24, 1949.

I certify that the above is a true extract from the minutes of the Supreme Court of Georgia, and that T. J. Lewis paid the above bill of costs.

Witness my signature and the seal of said court hereto affixed the day and year last above written.

K. C. Bleckley, Clerk.

Case No. 32130.
Court of Appeals of Georgia.

Remittitur from Supreme Court

Filed in office Jan. 24, 1949. Morgan Thomas, Deputy Clerk Court of Appeals of Georgia.

[fol. 37] SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, — TERM, 1949

Number ——

RICHARD J. BROWN, Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA, Respondent

STIPULATION AS TO PRINTED RECORD

Pursuant to Rule 38, par. 8, of the Supreme Court of the United States it is stipulated and agreed by and between counsel for the above-named parties that there may be omitted from the printed record in the above-entitled cause the following matter not essential to the question presented by the petition for the writ of certiorari to be filed herein:

1. Bill of Exceptions.
2. Certificate of Judge as to Bill of Exceptions.
3. Exhibit A to Bill of Exceptions.
4. Acknowledgement of Service of Bill of Exceptions.
5. Certificate of Bill of Exceptions, Deputy Clerk, Superior Court.
6. Certificate of Filing Bill of Exceptions in office of Clerk, Court of Appeals of Georgia.
7. Certificate of Transcript of Record by Deputy Clerk, Superior Court.
8. Certificate of Filing Transcript of Record in Office of Clerk, Court of Appeals of Georgia.
9. Motion for Rehearing, Court of Appeals of Georgia.
10. Certificate of Counsel on Motion for Rehearing, Court of Appeals of Georgia.
11. Acknowledgement of Service of Motion for Rehearing, Court of Appeals of Georgia.

[fol. 38] 12. Certificate of Filing Motion for Rehearing in office of Clerk, Court of Appeals of Georgia.

13. Certiorari Notice.
14. Certificate of Service of Certiorari Notice.
15. Notice to Clerk of Court of Appeals of Georgia of Filing Application for Certiorari in Supreme Court of Georgia.
16. Certificate of Filing Notice of Application for Certiorari, by Clerk, Court of Appeals of Georgia.

17. Certificate of Payment of Costs in Supreme Court of Georgia.

18. Certificate of Record by Clerk, Court of Appeals of Georgia.

It is further stipulated and agreed that should the Clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States deem it necessary or desirable to include any of the foregoing in the printed record, he is authorized to do so.

This, the 10th day of February, 1949.

Thomas J. Lewis, Attorney for Petitioner, First National Bank Bldg., Atlanta, Ga. Morris B. Shaw, Heyman, Howell & Heyman, Attorney- for Respondent, Connally Building, Atlanta, Ga.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

ORDER ALLOWING CERTIORARI—Filed May 2, 1949

The petition herein for a writ of certiorari to the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia is granted. The case is transferred to the summary docket.

And it is further ordered that the duly certified copy of the transcript of the proceedings below which accompanied the petition shall be treated as though filed in response to such writ.

LIBRARY
SUPREME COURT, U.S.

Office - Supreme Court, U. S.
FILED
MAR 18 1949
CHARLES ELMORE CROPLEY
CLERK

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, ~~1948~~ 1949

No. ~~[illegible]~~ 43

RICHARD J. BROWN,

Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA AND BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITION.

THOMAS J. LEWIS,
First National Bank Building,
Atlanta, Georgia,
Attorney for Petitioner.

RICHARD M. MAXWELL,
First National Bank Building,
Atlanta, Georgia,
Of Counsel.

INDEX

Subject Index

	Page
Petition for Writ of Certiorari	1
I. Jurisdiction	2
II. Statutes Involved	2
III. Questions Presented	2
IV. Summary Statement of Matters Involved	2
V. Reasons for Allowance of Writ	3
Brief in Support of Petition	5
I. Opinion Below	5
II. Jurisdiction of Court	5
III. Statement of the Case	6
IV. Specification of Errors	8
V. Argument	9
A. Georgia Decisions Discussed	9
B. The Federal Decisions Govern	11
C. Federal Decisions Discussed	12
D. State Court Decisions other than Georgia	15
E. Petitioner Was Entitled to Jury Trial	16
F. Conclusion	18

Table of Cases

Adskin v. *Wash. Ry., etc. Co.*, 276 P. 1094 and 294 P. 605	16
Anderson v. *A. T. & S. F. R. Co.*, 333 U. S. 821; 68 S. Ct. 854; 92 L. Ed. 840	4, 19
Bailey v. *Cent. Vt. Ry.*, 319 U. S. 350; 63 S. Ct. 1062; 87 L. Ed. 1444	12, 16
B. & O. R. Co. v. *Flechtner*, 300 F. 318; Cert. Den. 266 U. S. 613; 45 S. Ct. 95; 69 L. Ed. 468	13
B. & O. R. Co. v. *Kast*, 299 F. 419; Cert. Den. 266 U. S. 613; 45 S. Ct. 95; 69 L. Ed. 468	13
Brown v. *W. Ry. of Ala.*, — Ga. App. —, 49 S. E. (2d) 833; Cert. Den. —, Ga. —	5

Page

Burks v. *A. T. & S. F. R. Co.*, 109 P. 1087 16
C. B. & Q. R. Co., v. *Kelley*, 74 F. (2d) 80 14
C. & N.W. Ry. Co., v. *Peeler*, 140 F. (2d) 865 15
C. N. O. & T. Ry. Co. v. *Davis*, 293 F. 481 12
C. N. O. & T. Ry. Co. v. *Thompson*, 236 F. 1 12
Cent. of Ga. Ry. Co. v. *Goens*, 30 Ga. App. 770; 119 S. E. 669 11
Doyle v. *St. L. etc. Ry. Co.*, 31 S. W. (2d) 1010 16
E. Tenn. Ry. Co. v. *Suddeth*, 86 Ga. 388; 12 S. E. 682 9
Ellis v. *U. P. R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 649; 67 S. Ct. 598; 91 L. Ed. 572 16
El Paso Etc. Ry. Co. v. *Alexander*, 117 S. W. 927 16
Fleming v. *Kellett*, 167 F. (2d) 265 15
Gay v. *Osteen*, 56 Ga. App. 224; 192 S. E. 539 11
Gillespie v. *Grand Trunk R. Co.*, 113 N. W. 1116 16
Green v. *A. C. L. R. Co.*, 134 S. E. 385 16
Haddock v. *Haddock*, 201 U. S. 562; 26 S. Ct. 525; 50 L. Ed. 867 18
Haskins v. *So. Pac. Co.*, 39 P. (2d) 957 16
Henwood v. *Chaney*, 156 F. (2d) 392; Cert. Den. 329 U. S. 760; 67 S. Ct. 113; 912 L. Ed. 655 15
Hicks v. *Mo. P. R. Co.*, 40 S. W. (2d) 512 16
Holloway v. *M. K. & T. R. Co.*, 208 S. W. 27 16
Jesionowski v. *B. & M. R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 452; 67 S. Ct. 401; 91 L. Ed. 416 16
Lavendar v. *Kurn*, 327 U. S. 645; 66 S. Ct. 740; 90 L. Ed. 916 16
Lee v. *Cent. R. Co.*, 86 Ga. 231; 12 S. E. 307 9
Lillie v. *Thompson*, 332 U. S. 459; 68 S. Ct. 140; 92 L. Ed. 115 4, 19
Seaboard A.L.R. Co. v. *Bishop*, 132 Ga. 71; 63 S. E. 1103 9
Sherrer v. *Sherrer*, 334 U. S. 343; 68 S. Ct. 1097, — L. Ed. — 18
Smith v. *Shumacher*, 85 P. (2d) 967 16
So. Ry. Co. v. *Newton's Admr.*, 60 S. E. 625 16
So. Ry. Co. v. *Puckett*, 16 Ga. App. 551; 85 S. E. 809, Affd. 244 U. S. 571; 37 S. Ct. 703; 61 L. Ed. 1321 10
St. L. Ry. Co. v. *Ford*, 121 S. W. 709 16

Page

Tennant v. *Peoria etc. Ry. Co.*, 321 U. S. 32; 64 S. Ct. 409; 88 L. Ed. 520 16

Tiller v. *A.C.L. R. Co.*, 318 U. S. 54; 63 S. Ct. 444; 87 L. Ed. 610 10, 16

Virginia Ry. v. *Staton*, 81 F. (2d) 133 13

Wilkerson v. *McCarthy, et al.*, No. 53, October Term, 1948, decided January 31, 1949, 17 L. W. 4175 18

STATUTES CITED

Federal Employers' Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A. Secs. 51-59 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 20

Judicial Code, Title 28, United States Code Sec. 1257 (3) 2

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1948

No. 652

RICHARD J. BROWN,

Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

To the Honorable, The Chief Justice of the United States and to The Honorable Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States:

Petitioner, Richard J. Brown, prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment of the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia entered in the above cause (R. 8), October 2, 1948, and numbered and entitled in said Court "Richard J. Brown, Plaintiff-in-Error *v.* Western Railway of Alabama, Defendant-in-Error, Number 32130." Petition for rehearing was denied by said Court on October 22, 1948 (R. 9) and the Supreme Court of Georgia denied the writ of certiorari in said cause (R. 9) on January 12, 1949, at which time the judgment of the said Court of Appeals became final.

I. Jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of this Court is founded on Title 28 United States Code, Section 1257 (3).

II. Statutes Involved

This case arises under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51-59) set forth in the Appendix.

III. Question Presented

The question presented is whether or not the petition filed in the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia, set forth a cause of action against the defendant railroad company under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, which was good against general demurrer.

IV. Summary Statement of Matter Involved

Petitioner brought suit under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51 *et seq.*) against respondent in the Superior Court, Fulton County, Georgia, a court of competent jurisdiction (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 56) for injuries sustained by him.

The petition (R. 1) alleged, in substance, that petitioner, in the performance of his duties as a brakeman for respondent around the engine in the switchyards of respondent at Opelika, Alabama, stepped on a large clinker lying beside the tracks, fell and was injured; that respondent "had allowed" clinkers, coal, bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris to accumulate in the yards along the tracks where it was necessary for petitioner to work; that the place was unsafe for use by petitioner; that respondent's negligence directly and proximately caused in whole or in part, petitioner's injuries, and; that the respondent was negligent "(a) In failing to furnish plaintiff with a reasonably safe place in which to work, as herein alleged, (b) In leaving

clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris along the side of track in its yards as aforesaid, well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakemen working therein and that petitioner would have to perform his duties with said yards in such condition; (c) In not removing clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris from its yards before assigning the plaintiff to work therein at said time and place as herein alleged." The jurisdictional facts, injuries and damages are pleaded.

Respondent filed a general demurrer to the petition (R. 4) which demurrer was sustained in the Superior Court (R. 4). The Court of Appeals of Georgia affirmed (R. 8), motion therein for rehearing was denied (R. 9), and the Supreme Court of Georgia denied certiorari (R. 9).

V. Reasons for Allowance of Writ

1. This case involves a statute of the United States: The Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51 *et seq.*) and, more particularly, the sufficiency of a petition to state a cause of action thereunder. In its narrowest aspect it presents the question of whether or not the presence of a large clinker near the tracks in a railroad's yards may constitute negligence to an employee injured thereby. In its broadest aspects it presents the question of the duty of a railroad company to remove known obstacles or hazards alongside tracks which may cause injury to railroad employees. These are questions of gravity and importance under the Federal Act.

2. Furthermore, we shall indicate in our brief that the decision of the Georgia Court in this case is not in accord with applicable decisions of this Court and is in direct conflict with the decisions of Federal Courts and of State Appellate Courts of other jurisdictions. In the interest of

uniformity of application of the Federal Act this Court should grant the writ, as prayed and correct the decision heretofore rendered herein.

In two recent decisions under the Federal Employers' Liability Act this Court has corrected errors of trial courts which were analogous to that which petitioner contends has been made in this case, viz: dismissal on demurrer. *Andersen* v. *A. T. & S. F. R. Co.*, 333 U. S. 821, 68 S. Ct. 854, 92 L. Ed. 840, and *Lillie* v. *Thompson*, 332 U. S. 459, 68 S. Ct. 140, 92 L. Ed. 115.

Prayer

WHEREFORE, petitioner prays that this petition be granted, and for such other and further relief in the premises as may be proper and just.

This the 18 day of March, 1949.

THOMAS J. LEWIS,
Attorney for Petitioner.

RICHARD M. MAXWELL,
Of Counsel.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1948

No. 652

RICHARD J. BROWN,

Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent

BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PETITION FOR CERTIORARI

I. Opinion Below

The opinion of the Court of Appeals of Georgia has not yet been officially reported, but is set forth in 49 S. E. (2d) 833 and in the Record, page 5 *et seq.*

II. Jurisdiction of Court

The jurisdiction of this Court is founded on Title 28 United States Code, Section 1257(3), a right being specially set up and claimed under a statute of the United States, namely, the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51 *et seq.*).

The date on which the judgment sought to be reviewed became final was January 12, 1949 (R. 9).

III. Statement of the Case

To the petition herein the defendant filed a general demurrer which was sustained in the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia. The Court of Appeals of Georgia affirmed on October 2, 1948 and denied the motion for rehearing on October 22, 1948. Certiorari was denied by the Supreme Court of Georgia on January 12, 1949.

Brown sued the Western Railway of Alabama under the Federal Employers' Liability Act for personal injuries sustained when he, in the performance of his duties as a brakeman, ran around the engine during a switching movement in the railroad yards at Opelika, Alabama, stepped on a large clinker lying beside the tracks, fell and was injured.

We adopt the analysis of the petition by the Court of Appeals of Georgia:

> "Defendant railroad is a corporation having an office, agent, and place of doing business in Fulton County, and has injured and damaged petitioner in the sum of $5,000.00. Petitioner was employed on or about August 25, 1947 by the Atlanta and West Point Rail Road Company as a brakeman on freight train No. 1, running from Atlanta to West Point, and by the Western Railway of Alabama, the defendant, on this same train while it was running from West Point, Georgia, through Opelika, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama. 'Petitioner while engaged in the employment aforesaid was injured as a result of the negligence of defendant when he slipped and fell on a large clinker lying beside the track in the switch yards of Opelika, Alabama, over which it was necessary for petitioner to cross in giving signals to his engineer . . . The yards aforesaid are jointly operated by the defendant and the Trustees of the Central of Georgia Railway Company . . . Defendant had allowed clinkers, coal, bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris to collect in said yards along the side of the tracks and . . . it was necessary for petitioner, in the performance of his duties, to cross

over such material and debris . . . It was the duty of defendant to use reasonable and proper care to provide him a reasonably safe place in which to work in the course of his duties and employment . . . The defendant did not regard its duty in this behalf to use reasonable and proper care to provide plaintiff a reasonably safe place in which to discharge his duties as aforesaid, but directed him to work in said yards at said time under the conditions above described . . . The debris aforesaid scattered along beside the tracks and over said yards at said time made (the) yards unsafe for use by petitioner in the performance of his duties and . . . defendant thereby negligently failed to furnish petitioner a reasonably safe place in which to work by reason thereof . . . Petitioner while switching cars in the yards aforesaid, ran around the engine, as his duties at said time required, to mount the top of cars being handled so that he could see the back end of the cut of cars and the engineer at the same time and give the necessary signals for the switching movement there being made, and while in the performance of such duties as aforesaid he stepped on a large clinker lying beside the tracks as aforesaid which caused petitioner to fall and be injured in the particulars hereinafter set out.' The petition contains a description of plaintiff's injuries and shows that a bone of his right foot was broken, which did not at first heal properly, with resulting pain and the loss of time from work. It is alleged that $1,304.01 was lost in wages because of his inability to work as a result of the injuries. Negligence is charged to the defendant in the following particulars: '(a) In failing to furnish plaintiff with a reasonably safe place in which to work as herein alleged. (b) In leaving clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris along the side of track in its yard as aforesaid, well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakemen working therein and that petitioner would have to perform his duties with said yards in such condition. (c) In not removing clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and

other debris from its yards before assigning plaintiff to work therein at said time and place as herein alleged.' The petitioner shows that plaintiff and defendant were engaged in Interstate Commerce at the time of the accident."

IV. Specification of Errors

We submit that the Court of Appeals of Georgia was in error:

(a) In affirming the judgment of the Superior Court sustaining the general demurrer.

(b) In holding that the petition does not set out a cause of action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act.

(c) In holding that the petition did not show negligence on the part of the defendant.

(d) In holding that applicant was negligent.

(e) In holding that applicant's negligence was the sole cause of his injuries.

(f) In holding as follows:

> "The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence. Furthermore, it is not shown how or for what length of time the clinker was in the yard, or wherein it rendered the yards unsafe for employees accustomed to work there. Insofar as the allegations of the petition show, the sole cause of the accident was the act of the plaintiff in stepping on this large clinker, which he was able to see and could have avoided. It was he, who, without any outside intervention, failed to look, stepped on the clinker, and fell. Under such circumstances there is no question of negligence on the part of the defendant to present to a jury, and the trial court did not err in sustaining the general demurrer and in dismissing the action", this holding being in conflict with the allegations of the petition and the law applicable.

(g) In failing to apply the Federal Law to a case involving a Federal question in an action under a Fed-

eral statute, viz: The Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51, *et seq.*).

V. Argument

The single question here presented is whether or not petitioner's complaint (R. 1) set forth a cause of action good against general demurrer. The Georgia Courts, with complete unanimity, have held that it did not. We earnestly believe that it did.

A. *The Georgia Decisions Discussed*

The core of the opinion of the Court of Appeals of Georgia—the only written opinion of any Court in this case thus far—is found in these words:

> "The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence."

Assiduous research has brought to light no reported decision in accordance with this expression of law, with one possible exception, that of *Lee* v. *Cent. R. Co.*, 86 Ga. 231 12 S. E. 307 (1890) which was decided prior to the Federal Employers' Liability Act, and in which the court said:

> "The plaintiff's injury was simply a misfortune, the incident of his employment and of the risk consequent thereon."

In a subsequent decision handed down at the same Term, Mr. Chief Justice Bleckly who wrote the decision in the *Lee* case, *supra*, said that it was based upon the doctrine of assumption of risk. *E. Tenn. Ry. Co.* v. *Suddeth*, 86 Ga. 388 at 391 (1890). And Mr. Justice Atkinson so construed the *Lee* case, *supra*, in his dissenting opinion in *Seaboard A. L. Ry.* v. *Bishop*, 132 Ga. 71 at 93 (1909). The 1939 amendment to the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 54) abolished the doctrine of assumption of risk in

such cases. *Tiller* v. *A. C. L. R. Co.*, 318 U. S. 54, 63 S. Ct. 444; 87 L. Ed. 610.

The *Lee* case is distinguishable from the case at bar on its facts: Lee stepped from a moving train onto the clinker whereas Brown stepped on the clinker when he "ran around the engine as his duties at said time required" (Pet. par. 10, R. 2); the opinion in the *Lee* case, *supra*, does not indicate that the clinker was in the *railroad yards*, whereas the petition so alleges in Brown's case; there was no showing that the surrounding terrain was unsafe generally for Lee, whereas Brown alleges that the railroad company "had allowed clinkers, coal, bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris to collect in said yards along the side of the tracks and that it was necessary for petitioner, in the performance of his duties, to cross over all such material and debris." (Pet. par. 6, R. 1-2.)

There is an indication in the language used in the opinion in the *Lee* case, *supra*, that these variants are controlling as to result (86 Ga. At P. 233):

> "There is no suggestion that the condition of the track or the neighboring surface was unsafe, save in that one spot, and there is no suggestion that the plaintiff's duty required him to step off at that spot rather than any other."

The Court of Appeals of Georgia in *So. Ry. Co.* v. *Puckett*, 16 Ga. App. 551, 86 S. E. 809, held that the presence of three large clinkers near a track in a railroad yard made a question of negligence for the jury, and this Court affirmed, *So. Ry. Co.* v. *Puckett*, 244 U. S. 571; 37 S. Ct. 703; 61 L. Ed. 1321, saying:

> "It is contended that there is no sufficient ground for attributing negligence to defendant because of the presence of large clinkers in the path along which plaintiff, in the course of his duty, was called upon to pass.

This is no more than a question of fact, without exceptional features. . . ."

Cent. of Ga. Ry. Co. v. *Goens*, 30 Ga. App. 770; 119 S. E. 669 (1923) held good on general demurrer a petition alleging that the employee's death was a result of defendant's negligence when he struck his foot against an arch-brick eight inches square and five inches thick and also stumbled over a large accumulation of clinkers while, in the course of duty as a switchman, he was walking beside a moving train in railroad yards at night. Goen's vision was obscured by darkness; Brown's vision was obscured by the engine, around which he ran.

The other Georgia decision, somewhat comparable to Brown's case, is *Gay* v. *Osteen*, 56 Ga. App. 224, 192 S. E. 539 but it was decided under the Georgia Employers' Liability Act on assumption of risk and failure to prove knowledge or notice of the railroad company that the brake-shoe, on which plaintiff stepped, was lying beside the tracks. Knowledge of defendant is specifically set forth in Brown's petition (Pet. par. 17-b, R. 3), hence is not pertinent here.

These Georgia decisions are cited as examples of the somewhat vacillating manner in which the Georgia Courts have looked upon cases of this nature over the years. Each is distinguishable from the case here presented, as we have endeavored to show.

However, the Georgia cases are not controlling.

B. *The Federal Decisions Govern*

This action was brought under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51, *et seq.* See Appendix), as the Court of Appeals of Georgia recognized in the initial phase of its opinion.

The rights created by that Act are Federal rights protected by Federal rather than by local rules of law, and

this is true in suits charging negligence of the carrier in failing to furnish the employee a reasonably safe place to work. "That rule is deeply engrained in Federal jurisprudence." *Bailey* v. *Cent. Vt. Ry.*, 319 U. S. 350; 63 S. Ct. 1062; 87 L. Ed. 1444. It is requisite, therefore, that we look to the Federal decisions.

C. The Federal Decisions Discussed

Cin., N. O. & T. P. Ry. Co. v. *Thompson*, 236 F. 1, (6th Cir. 1916) was a case in which a brakeman, in dismounting from cars moving six or eight miles per hour in railroad yards, stepped on a "loose piece of furnace slag" the size of a cocoanut, was thrown beneath the cars and was injured. At P. 3 the Court said:

> "The negligence complained of was permitting that piece of slag to be there."

The opinion deals almost entirely with the question of assumption of risk and contributory negligence, but the verdict and judgment below for plaintiff was affirmed.

Cin., N. O. & T. R. Ry. Co. v. *Davis*, 293 F. 481 (6th C. C. A.) held the railroad liable for injuries to a brakeman who tripped over a cross-tie while running to throw a switch. Negligence charged was in "throwing and distributing crossties promiscuously along the track and in such near proximity thereto as to menace the safety of plaintiff in the discharge of his duties." The court said, P. 483:

> "However that may be, it was the duty of the railway company to exercise reasonable care to provide its employees a safe place in which to work, consistent with the nature of the employment. The company knew that in the operation of its railroad it would become necessary, from time to time, for brakemen to alight from the train and run ahead of it to throw switches . . . it was a question for the jury to determine whether the

throwing of the ties promiscuously along its tracks and so near thereto as to endanger the lives of its employees in the performance of their duties, was negligence, or evidenced negligence, or evidenced a negligent disregard of and failure to perform its duty to exercise reasonable care to furnish its employees a safe place to work."

B. & O. R. Co. v. *Kast*, 299 F. 419 (6th Cir. 1924) cert. den. 266 U. S. 613, affirmed a judgment below for plaintiff, a machinist's helper who had sued for injuries sustained when he stepped on a socket-wrench lying in the pathway in the defendant's yards The Court held that the question of defendant's negligence was proper for submission to the jury. (Headnote 3.)

In *B. & O. R. Co.* v. *Flechtner*, 300 F. 318, (6th Cir. 1924), cert. den. 266 U. S. 613, 45 S. Ct. 95, 69 L. Ed. plaintiff was injured while working as a brakeman in defendant's yards when he stepped on a hoop alongside the tracks. The court, affirming the judgment below for the plaintiff said, p. 320:

> "In one respect at least the facts here are stronger than in the Kast case. The rusty condition of the hoop justified a submission to the jury of the question whether or not defendant had actual notice or in the exercise of due care should have known in sufficient time to remove it, that the hoop was improperly there, *and whether or not, because of its presence, the place was reasonably safe for its employees.*"

In *Virginian Ry. Co. v. Staton*, 81 F. (2d) 133 (4th Cir. 1936), the railroad was held liable for injuries received by a brakeman when his breeches-leg caught on a spike protruding 2½ inches to 4 inches. The court, by Judge Soper, said that it was not necessary to decide whether or not the Federal Employers' Liability Act applied to the facts because plaintiff could recover "even if the harsher rules of the common law of negligence are applied." (P. 134.)

Then, after discussion of the contention of the railroad that the presence of protruding spikes did not indicate a lack of due care on its part, the court said, p. 135:

> "On the other hand, the evidence in the pending case shows that the railway company was well aware that constant supervision was required in order to keep its roadbed in good condition for it caused its tracks in the railroad yard, where the accident occurred, to be inspected by a track-walker twice a week, and by a foreman once a week so that protruding spikes might be hammered back into place. It is admitted that ordinary spikes work up gradually and the plaintiff testified that it would take a spike three months to work up to a height of four inches above the tie. We think, therefore, that the jury might reasonably have inferred that the duty of inspection had been carelessly performed, for otherwise spikes protruding according to various estimates from 2½ to 4 inches would have been discovered and put back in place.
>
> ". . . It was, therefore, proper in the pending case for the District Judge to submit the question to the jury whether the defendant railway company had performed the duty of exercising reasonable care to furnish to the plaintiff a reasonably safe place to work, and the motion of the defendant for a directed verdict in its favor was rightly refused."

C. B. & O. R. Co. v. *Kelley*, 74 F. (2d) 80 (8th Cir. 1934) dealt with the death of a brakeman who was killed during a switching movement when thrown from a car and run over in making a flying switch. Negligence alleged was in the railroad allowing weeds to grow up above the top of the rails, causing the wheels to skid when the brakes were applied. The court said, p. 83:

> "Whether or not permitting weeds to accumulate on the tracks to such an extent as to come between the wheels of the engine and the top of the rails, and thus causing the powerful and heavy locomotive to slide,

was negligence under the facts and circumstances of this case, was a jury question."

In the recent decision of *Chi. & N. W. Ry. Co.* v. *Peeler*, 140 F. (2d) 865 (8th Cir. 1944), the question was whether a protruding crossing plank over which the plaintiff switchman stumbled constituted negligence and the court answered, saying,

> "Upon this evidence the jury was warranted in finding that the protruding end of the plank was a defect in appellant's 'works,' that such defect was due to appellant's negligence and that Peeler's injuries resulted from such negligence. Compare *Thomason v. Boles*, 123 F. (2d) 487, cert. den. 315 U. S. 804, *McCarthy v. Palmer*, 113 P. (2d) 721, *Lock v. C. B. & O. R. Co.*, 219 S. W. 719."

Henwood v. *Cheney*, 156 F. (2d) 392 (8th Cir. 1946), was an action for injuries to plaintiff switchman when he slipped on oil and mud as he ran beside moving cars trying to pull a coupling pin. The oil came from engines and tank cars which leaked. Negligence charged was failure of the railroad to furnish plaintiff a reasonably safe place to work. (p. 394). Judgment below for plaintiff was affirmed. See, also *Fleming* v. *Kellett*, 167 F. (2d) 265.

D. *State Court Decisions Other Than Georgia*

One of the bases for requesting this Court to grant certiorari in this case is the conflict between the Georgia decisions herein and the decisions of both Federal and State Courts of other jurisdictions. The strong urge of uniformity of application of Federal law throughout the judicial system which administers such law has long been recognized by this Court. Consequently, we turn now to the decisions of State Courts other than Georgia.

Without burdening this Court with a detailed analysis of those cases we point to the following, which, we submit, are

in conflict with the opinion of the Georgia Court in the case at bar, showing as they do that such courts held that obstacles or hazards alongside tracks where employees must work constitute negligence on the part of the carrier and, hence, support our position here:

Doyle v. *S.V.L. etc. Ry. Co.*, 31 S.W. (2d) 1010 (wire embedded in footpath along track); *Haskins* v. *So. Pac. Co.*, 39 P. (2d) 895 (umbrella plant); *Smith* v. *Schumacher*, 85 P. (2d) 967 (embedded angle bar); *Green* v. *A.C.L. R. Co.*, 134 S. E. 385 (limb of a tree); *So. Ry. Co.* v. *Newton's Admr.*, 60 S. E. 625 (trench); *El Paso, etc., Ry. Co.* v. *Alexander*, 117 S. W. 927 (lumps of coke); *St. L., etc., Ry. Co.* v. *Ford*, 121 S. W. 709 (space between ties); *Holloway* v. *M. K. & T. Ry. Co.*, 208 S. W. 27 (insecure ballast); *Burks* v. *A. T. & S. F. Ry. Co.*, 109 P. 1087 (lump of coal); *Adskim* v. *Wash. Ry. & NW Co.*, 276 P. 1094 and 294 P. 605 (pile of cinders and gravel); *Hicks* v. *Mo. Pac. R. Co.*, 40 S. W. (2d) 512 brake-shoe); *Gillispie* v. *Grand Trunk Ry. Co.*, 113 N. W. 1116 (pile of gravel).

No doubt the authorities might be multiplied.

E. *Petitioner Entitled to Jury Trial*

> "To deprive railroad workers of the benefit of a jury trial in close or doubtful cases is to take away a goodly portion of the relief which Congress has afforded them."

said this Court in *Bailey* v. *Cent. Vt. Ry. Co.*, 319 U. S. 350, 63 S. Ct. 1062, 87 L. Ed. 1444, a safe-place-to-work case. See, also, *Tiller* v. *A.C.L. R. Co.*, 318 U. S. 54, 63 S. Ct. 444, 87 L. Ed. 610; *Tennant* v. *Peoria & P. U. Ry. Co.*, 321 U. S. 32, 64 S. Ct. 409, 88 L. Ed. 520; *Lavendar* v. *Kurn*, 327 U. S. 653, 66 S. Ct. 740, 90 L. Ed. 421; *Ellis* v. *U.P. R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 649; 67 S. Ct. 598, 91 L. Ed. 576; *Jesionowski* v. *B. & M. R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 452, 67 S. Ct. 401, 91 L. Ed. 416.

At the outset of his case Brown has been met with a decision sustaining a general demurrer. Although the Federal decisions cited *supra*, p. 12), leave little doubt that the pleaded facts sufficiently and properly allege negligence on the part of the railroad company, we submit that, at the very least, the question of whether or not the defendant was negligent in knowingly leaving a large clinker alongside its tracks in its yards where employees would have to work is a jury question. To paraphrase the language of the *Bailey* case, *supra:* all facts and circumstances are for the jury to weigh and appraise in determining whether respondent in furnishing Brown with that particular place in which to perform the task, was negligent. The debatable quality of that issue, the fact that fair-minded men might reach different conclusions, emphasizes the appropriateness of leaving the question to the jury. . . . Reasonable care and cause and effect are as elusive here as in other fields. But the jury has been chosen as the appropriate tribunal to apply those standards to the facts of these personal injuries.

This is not the case of a man stepping to the ground from a moving engine, as was the *Lee* case, *supra.* Rather, it is one in which plaintiff ran around a moving engine in railroad yards, as his duties required, in which circumstances he was required to look out for moving cars, give and receive signals, etc. These are factors relating to contributory negligence and should not properly be considered on demurrer. They are mentioned here only because the opinion of the Court of Appeals of Georgia states that petitioner "was able to see and could have avoided" the clinker, a dictum which disregards both the realities of the situation and the language of this Court in *Bailey* v. *Cent. Vt. Ry. Co., supra:*

> "The duty of the employer becomes 'more imperative' as the risk increases. *Patton* v. *T. & P. Ry. Co.,*

179 U. S. 658, 21 S. Ct. 275, 277, 45 L. Ed. 361, and cases cited."

In *Wilkerson* v. *McCarthy, et al., Trustees of the Denver, R. G. & W. R. Co.*, No. 53, Oct. Term, 1948, — U. S. —, — S. Ct. —, — L. Ed. —, decided January 31, 1949 (17 L. W. 4175) this Court, in considering a Federal Employers' Liability Act case, said:

> "But the issue of negligence is one for juries to determine according to their findings of whether an employer's conduct measures up to what a reasonable and prudent person would have done under the same circumstances. And a jury should hold a master 'liable for injuries attributable to conditions under his control when they are not such as a reasonable man ought to maintain in the circumstances,' bearing in mind that 'the standard of care must be commensurate to the dangers of the business'. *Tiller v. A. C. L. R. C.*, 318 U. S. 54, 67."

Certainly in the light of this expression petitioner should have been permitted to offer proof on the issue of negligence and, assuming its sufficiency, the Court should have placed before the jury the question of whether a reasonable and prudent person would permit a large clinker to be alongside a track in railroad yards where employees must work in performing their duties.

F. *Conclusion*

In a dissenting opinion in the recent decisions of *Sherrer* v. *Sherrer*, 334 U. S. 343, 68 S. Ct. 1097, — L. Ed. —, Mr. Justice Frankfurter (Mr. Justice Murphy concurring), quoted Mr. Justice Holmes in *Haddock* v. *Haddock*, 201 U. S. 562, 26 S. Ct. 525, 50 L. Ed. 867, 5 Ann. Cas. 1:

> "I do not suppose that civilization will come to an end whichever way this case is decided."

Nor do we believe that this Court's disposition of this case will rock the Republic on its foundations. However, we do earnestly believe that the decision in this case will be one of great importance under the Federal Employers' Liability Act since it deals with the duty of hundreds of carriers to keep reasonably safe for hundreds of thousands of employees the premises whereon they must work, the import of the term "reasonably safe", its application to the somewhat-common facts presented here, and whether or not, in the final analysis, the determination of the question of ordinary care is the province of a jury acting under proper instructions.

We have brought to the attention of this Court the numerous decisions, Federal and State, with which the decision of the Court of Appeals of Georgia clashes, and we ask this Court to say that the impact of these authorities obliterates the decision of that Court in *Brown* v. *Western Railway of Alabama* from the books.

In *Anderson* v. *A. T. & S. F. Ry. Co.*, 333 U. S. 821, 68 S. Ct. 854, 92 L. Ed. 840, this Court reached out to an erroneous decision in the trial court of California in the nature of general demurrer (Footnote No. 1), granted certiorari, reversed and remanded. See, also, comparable decision as to a Federal District Court in *Lillie* v. *Thompson*, 332 U. S. 459, 68 S. Ct. 140, 92 L. Ed. 115.

We respectfully submit that certiorari should be granted, the decision of the Court of Appeals of Georgia reversed and the case remanded.

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APPENDIX

The relevant parts of the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U.S.C.A., Sec. 51, et seq.) deemed to have an important bearing on the case read, in part, as follows:

"Section 51. Every common carrier by railroad while engaged in commerce between any of the several States . . . shall be liable in damages to any person suffering injury while he is employed by such carrier in such commerce . . . for such injury . . . resulting in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier, or by reason of any defect or insufficiency, due to its negligence, in its cars, engines, appliances, machinery, track, roadbed, works, boats, wharves, or other equipment."

"Section 53. In all actions hereafter brought against any such common carrier by railroad under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for personal injuries to any employee . . . the fact that the employee may have been guilty of contributory negligence shall not bar a recovery, but the damages shall be diminished by the jury in proportion to the amount of negligence attributable to such employee, . . ."

"Section 54. In any action brought against any common carrier or by virtue of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for injuries to, . . ., any of its employees, such employee shall not be held to have assumed the risk of his employment in any case where such injury . . . resulted in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents or employees of such carrier . . ."

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SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1949

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Respondent.

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

BRIEF ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS

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SUBJECT INDEX

	Page
Questions Presented	1
Statement of the Case	3
Summary of Argument	6
Argument	11
1. The Georgia Court Gave the Petition a Usual Construction in Accord with its Rules of Practice	11
2. Rules of Practice and Procedure under the Federal Employers' Liability Act Governed by the Law of the Forum	14
3. Mere Allegations that a Large Clinker has Come to Lie Momentarily in a Railroad Yard Does not Set Out a Cause of Action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act	19
Conclusion	23

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

American Jurisprudence, Vol. 35, page 875 16

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe R. Co. v. *Toops*, 281 U. S. (fol. 17) 351, 71 L. Ed. 896 10

Atlanta and West Point R. Co. v. *Hyde*, 45 Ga. App. 548 (165 S. E. 466) 14

B. & O. R. Co. v. *Fletcher*, 300 F. 318 (6th Cir. 1924) 21

Bellamy v. *Georgia Power Co.*, 70 Ga. App. 175, 27 S. E. (2d) 783 7

Brady v. *Southern Ry. Co.*, 320 U. S. 476, 88 L. Ed. 239 ... 19

Brown v. *S. H. Kress Co.*, 66 Ga. App. 242, (17 S. E. (2d) 758) 14

Castleberry v. *Fox*, 29 Ga. App. 35, (113 S. E. 110) 13

Cen. of Ga. Ry. Co. v. *Goens*, 30 Ga. App. 770, 119 S. E. 669 19

Cen. of Georgia R. Co. v. *Jones*, 152 Ga. 92; (108 S. E. 618); 28 Ga. App. 258; (110 S. E. 914); 260 U. S. 729; 67 L. Ed. 485 15

Cen. Vermont R. Co. v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507, 59 L. Ed. 1433 ..... 9, 14

Charleston and Western Carolina Rwy. Co. v. *Patton*, 22 Ga. App. 554, (96 S. E. 504) 12

C. B. & Q. R. Co. v. *Kelly*, 74 Fed. 2d 809 (8th Cir. 1934) . 21

C. C. O. R. Co. v. *DeAtley*, 241 U. S. 310, 60 L. Ed. 1016 .. 14

Cin. N. O. & T. Ry. Co. v. *Davis*, 293 F. 481, (6th C. C. A.) 21

Civil Code of Georgia of 1933, Section 81-1301 7

Common Law, 38th Printing, pages 94 and 95 20

Cook v. *Kroger Baking & Grocery Co.*, 65 Ga. App. 141; (15 S. E. (2nd) 531) 13

Corpus Juris, Vol. 25, page 944, Vol. 49, page 105 ..... 11, 16

Page

Cowdrick v. *Pa. R. Co.*, 39 A. 2nd 98; 323 U. S. 799, 89 L. Ed. 637 22

DeLong v. *Maine Cen. R. Co.*, 6 A. 2nd 431 14

Dewing v. *N. Y. Cen. R. Co.*, 183 N. E. 754 17

Doyal v. *Russell*, 183 Ga. 518 (189 S. E. 32) 12

Ellis v. *Southern Grocery Stores, Inc.*, 46 Ga. App. 254 (167 S. E., 324) 14

Ellis v. *Union Pacific R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 649, 91 L. Ed. 572 . . 10

Ellison v. *Georgia Railroad & Banking Co.*, 87 Ga. 691, 13 S. E. 809 8

Gay v. *Osteen*, 56 Ga. App. 224, 192 S. E. 539 19

Ga. So. etc., R. Co. v. *Smiley*, 151 Ga. 795 (108 S. E. 273) 16

Henry Brinkmeier v. *Missouri Pac. R. Co.*, 224 U. S. 268, 56 L. Ed. 758 14

Henwood v. *Cheney*, 156 F. 2d 392 21

Kentucky Union Company v. *Kentucky*, 219 U. S. 140, 55 L. Ed. 137 18

Krueger v. *MacDougald*, 148 Ga. 429, 96 S. E. 867 12

Lasagna v. *McCarthy, et al.*, 177 P. 2d 734, 332 U. S. 829, 92 L. Ed. 403 22

Lee v. *Cen. R. Co.*, 88 Ga. 231, 12 S. E. 307 18

Lee v. *Cen. of Ga. R. Co., et al.*, 252 U. S. 109, 64 L. Ed 482 18

Louisville & Nashville R. Co. v. *Stewart's Admx.*, 161 S. W. 557 16

Minn. & St. L. R. Co. v. *Bombolis*, 241 U. S. 211, 60 L. Ed. 961 15

Mondou v. *N. Y., N. H. & H. R. Co.*, 223 U. S. 1, 56 L. Ed. 327 . . . . . 15, 16

Nevada, California, Oregon Ry. Co. v. *Burrus*, 244 U. S. 103, 61 L. Ed. 1019 18

Page

Seaboard Air Line Railway v. *Horton*, 233 U. S. 492, 58 L. Ed. 1062 10

Small v. *Slocumb*, 112 Ga. 279 (37 S. E. 481, 53 L. R. A. 130, 81 Am. S. R. 50) 16

Southern Ry. Co. v. *Puckett*, 16 Ga. App. 551, 86 S. E. 809 .. 19

Tipton v. *A. T. & S. Fe R. Co.*, 298 U. S. 141, 80 L. Ed. 1091 14

Vandalia R. Co. v. *Ind. Ex. rel. South Bend*, 207 U. S. 359, 52 L. Ed. 246 18

Victor Herb v. *Norman B. Pitcairn*, 324 U. S. 117, 89 L. Ed. 789 14

Waller v. *Northern Pac. Terminal Co. of Oregon*, 166 Pac. 2d, 488 — U. S. —, (67 S. Ct. 45) 20

Wilkerson v. *McCarthy*, — U. S. —, 93 L. Ed. 403 ..... 9, 11

Wolfe v. *Henwood*, 162 F. 2d 998, 332 U. S. 773, 92 L. Ed. 357 22

STATUTES CITED

Federal Employers' Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A. Secs. 51-59

Safety Appliance Act, 45 U. S. C. A., Secs. 1-21

Civil Code of Georgia, Secs. 81-1301.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1948

No. 652

RICHARD J. BROWN,

Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent.

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

BRIEF ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS

Questions Presented

Petitioner has drawn the question he presents with a very broad brush, indeed. More finely drawn, these questions can be very decisive in assisting the Court in reaching its conclusion. We, therefore, state them with more particularity:

1. Whether well established state rules of procedure apply in actions under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A., Sec. 51, et seq)?

2. Whether a petition under state rules of practice, alleging simply the following, sets out a cause of action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act?

a. That there is a large clinker lying beside the track in a railroad yard;

b. That said clinker has been there only momentarily;

c. And which does not allege that the defendant had anything to do with the clinker being in said yard. (It appearing in the petition that the yards are used by another railroad as well as the defendant and there being, in any event, no allegation of negligence in connection with the placing of the clinker).

3. Whether the above questions are matters which present "special and important reasons" for the issuance of the writ of certiorari.

a. *The special facts in this case:*

With complete candor we suggest to the Court that petitioner is mistaken when he says of this case (petitioner's brief, page 3): "In its broadest aspects it presents the question of the duty of a railroad company to remove known obstacles or hazards alongside tracks which may cause injury to railroad employees." This case is one which turned on the fact that the petition did not allege that the railroad knew or ought to have known of the presence of the offending clinker. It cannot, therefore, possibly present the question above raised by petitioner. With all due regard for petitioner's counsel, we do not understand the assertion that this case presents the question of a railroad's duty to "remove known obstacles or hazards" (petitioner's brief, page 3). We have never doubted the duty of a railroad to remove *known* hazards; so far as we know, the Georgia Court of Appeals does not doubt a railroad's duty to remove *known* hazards. Nothing in the record shows any such doubt on the part of the Court of Appeals. Nothing in the petition points to the presence of any *known* hazard in this case. This case deals with a clinker, *unknown* in fact and *unknown* by legal implication.

Neither does this case present the question of "whether or

not the presence of a large clinker near the tracks in a railroad's yards may constitute negligence to an employee injured thereby," (petitioner's brief, page 3). This case presents the issue of the presence of a clinker under the circumstances alleged in this one petition. In this petition the offending clinker was not alleged to have been placed in the yard by the defendant and when the petition was construed against petitioner according to unvarying Georgia practice, it did not allege that the clinker had been placed in the yard except momentarily when the accident occurred.

b. *The Georgia Court of Appeals has restated in the decision herein only one substantive principle of law:* This principle is in complete accord with the many opinions of this Court interpreting and applying the Federal Employers' Liability Act. The one substantive principle of law laid down by the Georgia Court is this: "The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence" where "it is not shown how or for what length of time the clinker was in the yard . . . " (R. 8). This statement is predicated on the many times announced mandate of this Court that "The Act (Federal Employers' Liability Act) does not make the employer the insurer of the safety of his employees . . . " (R. 7).

Statement of the Case

Respondent accepts in the main the affirmative statement of facts embodied in the brief of the petitioner (petitioner's brief, pages 6, 7, and 8).

But the most remarkable feature of the petition in the case is not set forth in this adoption of the Georgia Court of Appeals' summary. For the petition at bar was more distinguished by what it failed to allege than what it actually charged. Presumably, counsel for petitioner, a skilled and experienced pleader, set forth in his petition the strongest possible case which

the facts in his client's matter would support. Then these facts from which this suit arose simply did not and could not, as pleaded and as they occurred, set forth a cause of action.

—1—

Petitioner's petition in paragraph 4 (R. 1) set out that the petitioner slipped and fell on a clinker lying beside the respondent's track. In paragraph 6 (R. 1 and 2) of the petition, petitioner alleged that coal, bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris were also in the yards of the respondent. But petitioner did not allege that he stepped on or was in any way injured by coal, bottles, tie plates, trash or "other debris." Thus the allusions to these other materials, such as coal, bottles, etc. are pure irrelevancies. The difficulty, of course, in the petitioner's case was that he could not fairly allege that the clinker he stepped on and the *one only clinker involved in this case* was negligently deposited or left in the yard with the respondent's actual or implied knowledge. Therefore, the petitioner attempted by allusion to connect extraneous matter, i. e., "debris," etc., to this *one clinker*. But not one word in the entire petition charges that this one clinker was in the yard through the respondent's negligence, nor was there any allegation in the petition that the petitioner was injured by anything except this one clinker. There was not the slightest allegation that this one clinker was part of a pile, but merely the statement in paragraph 4 (R. 1) that there was "a large clinker lying beside the track in the switch yards at Opelika, Alabama."

—2—

There was nothing in the petitioner's petition which alleged that this clinker was caused to be in the yard by the negligent operation of the respondent's locomotives.

—3—

The petition did not show that the respondent knew this one clinker was in the yard or that this clinker had remained there

for a sufficient length of time and under circumstances such that the respondent ought to have known of this clinker's presence in the yard. Petitioner's petition, in fact, contains not a single clause showing any negligence on the respondent's part in connection with this clinker. It did not appear that the clinker was deposited through the negligent operation of the locomotives of the respondent. In fact, the petition positively showed that these yards in which the clinker rested at the moment the petitioner stepped on it were used by another railroad, namely, the Central of Georgia Railway. (R. 1). The petition, of course, did not charge that the Western Railway of Alabama is in any way connected in responsibility to the operation of the trains of the Central of Georgia Railway.

Having failed to charge that the clinker *came to be* in the yard through the respondent's negligence, it was essential (if the petitioner would remain in court) for the petition to allege facts to show that in the operation of the yards the respondent had knowledge of the presence of the clinker and negligently did nothing to remove it, or that the respondent ought to have had knowledge of the clinker being in the yards and negligently failed to discover and remove it.

—4—

The petition alleged in paragraph 6 (R. 1 and 2) that the respondent had allowed "clinkers, coal, bottles, tie plates, trash and other debris to collect in said yards . . . ," but the petition nowhere alleged that the extraneous matter (which, by the way, had nothing to do whatever with the one clinker on which the petitioner stepped) had remained in the yards for one year, one month, one day, one hour, or one second. Construing, as the Court must, the petition against the pleader, it is clear that the petition charged merely that the alleged debris, etc., were in the respondent's yard for only the shortest imaginable length of time.

—5—

The petition did not anywhere allege that the clinker on which the petitioner stepped was part of that which had been "allowed . . . to collect." (R. 1 and 2).

—6—

In setting forth the grounds of negligence, the petitioner's petition charged in paragraph 17(b) (R. 3) that the respondent was negligent "in leaving coal, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash and other debris along the side of tracks in its yards as aforesaid, well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakemen working therein . . ." Nowhere in setting forth grounds of negligence did this petition charge that the respondent was negligent in leaving this *particular one clinker* on which the petitioner stepped in the yard where petitioner was injured. It will instantly occur to the Court that this paragraph 17(b) did not show that the respondent had or ought to have had any knowledge of the coal, bottles, etc., and debris, to say nothing of knowledge of this particular one clinker.

The most that this petition charged is that the yards contained certain debris (but nothing was shown to set forth the negligence of the respondent in connection with this fact) and that the respondent knew that generally yards with debris were dangerous for use by brakemen. The grave omission—the fatal fault in this petition—was the fact that it failed to show that the respondent had been guilty of negligence which contributed proximately to the injury of this petitioner.

Summary of Argument

The petitioner was injured in Alabama (R. 1). The respondent operates in Alabama. Petitioner was in the fortunate position of having at least three forums in which to bring his suit: he might have addressed his complaint to the Courts of

Alabama, or to the appropriate District Court of the United States, or to a Superior Court of the State of Georgia. Petitioner made his election and came to Fulton County, Georgia, and served an agent of the respondent who was located in Atlanta (R. 1). The Georgia Courts allow plaintiffs much latitude in pleading and in amending. Perhaps the Per Curiam ruling in *Bellamy* v. *Georgia Power Co.*, 70 Ga. App. 175, (27 S. E. (2nd) 783) will illustrate the enormous latitude which the petitioner enjoyed in drafting his pleadings. The Court there said:

> "Under our practice a defendant may deny as many of the plaintiff's allegations as he sees fit, and the denial of an allegation is not an affirmative declaration that the allegation is not true, but simply puts the plaintiff on notice that the burden is upon him to prove the allegation. We know of no rule of law or practice which penalizes the denial of allegations a defendant known are true. *The rule works both ways, and a plaintiff is not subject to penalty for alleging facts which he knows to be untrue at the time he makes them, where they are not made under oath.*" (Emphasis added).

But one rule of Georgia practice and procedure has been uniformly and invariably enforced: Pleadings are construed strictly against the pleader. For reasons which appeared sufficient to the petitioner, he chose the Georgia forum. To his petition the respondent entered a general demurrer. (R. 4). This demurrer was heard (R. 4). Prior to the ruling sustaining the general demurrer (R. 4) petitioner might have amended his petition to remain in court. *Section 81-1301* of the *Civil Code of Georgia of 1933* provides:

> "Amendments allowed when enough to amend by.—All parties, whether plaintiffs or defendants, in the superior or other courts, whether at law or in equity, may at any stage of the cause, as matter of right, amend their pleadings in all respects, whether in matter of form or of substance, provided there is enough in the pleadings to amend by."

This section has been very liberally construed. See *Ellison v. Georgia Railroad & Banking Co.*, 87 Ga. 691, (13 S. E. 809).

During the hearing on the general demurrer, petitioner was made aware of the legal objections to his petition. He did not choose to amend his petition to allege any one of the following:

1. That the clinker on which he stepped was dropped through the negligence of the respondent; and/or

2. That the presence of the clinker in the yard was known to the respondent; and/or

3. That the clinker had remained in the yard for a sufficient length of time to imply, as a matter of law, that the respondent had knowledge of the presence of the clinker in the yard.

Nor did the petitioner make any attempt to connect the vague and general allegation that there were "clinkers, bottles, tie plates, sticks, trash, and other debris along the side of the track . . . " (R. 3) to allegations about the offending clinker. Nor did the petitioner amend his petition so as to make the words "well knowing that said yards in such condition were dangerous for use by brakemen . . . " (R. 3) allege that the respondent knew that the yards were in such condition.

With a general demurrer interposed to the petition, with a hearing on the general demurrer, with ample opportunity to amend, with an unrestrained latitude of pleading, the petitioner elected to stand by his petition. Apparently this petition had stated his best possible case. Apparently the slightest strengthening of his allegations would have weakened the case before a jury. Apparently the petitioner had carried his allegations to the very limit of his evidence. Obviously, he was injured by one clinker which had momentarily fallen to lie *alone* in its *generc'* area.

The rules of practice and procedure in force in the Georgia Courts clearly apply to actions under the Federal Employers'

Liability Act. *Cent. Vt. R. Co.* v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507, (59 L. Ed. 1433). No error was committed by the Georgia Court of Appeals, therefore, in construing the petition against the pleader.

The petition, so construed, yielded a claim based on allegations that the petitioner was injured when he stepped on a single large clinker which had come momentarily to lie in a railroad yard without any fault of the defendant. Whatever the cause of the accident, whether it was due solely to the clinker's presence or solely to the negligence of the petitioner, or whether partially to the clinker's presence and partially to the petitioner's negligence, the following is incontrovertible: Under the decisions of this Court holding that an action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act must be based at least in part upon the negligence of the defendant, this petition stated, when properly construed, no cause of action. For assuming that the accident was solely and proximately related to the presence of the clinker, the petition did not relate in any way the presence of that clinker to any fault or negligence of the railroad.

Finally, no issue of special concern or importance is here presented to the Court. This Court has twenty times since the 1943 Term [see the concurring opinion of Mr. Justice Douglas in *Wilkerson* v. *McCarthy*, — U. S. —, (93 L. Ed. 403), (Advance Sheets)] reviewed Federal Employers' Liability cases on writs of certiorari. The essential elements of the law this Court has expounded under the Act are well-known. Perhaps these rules can be briefly summarized by pointing to their application in the very decision of the Georgia Court of Appeals of which petitioner is complaining:

> 1. "This is an action . . . controlled by the provisions of the Federal Employers' Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A., Section 51, et seq. Although brought in a State Court, *all matters of substance are controlled by Federal law.*" (Then

the Georgia Court of Appeals cites not only *Seaboard Air Line Railway* v. *Horton*, 233 U. S. 492, (58 L. Ed. 1062), but several Georgia cases holding the same. (R. 7). (Emphasis added).

2. "The Act does not make the employer the insurer of the safety of his employees while they are on duty. The basis of his liability is his negligence, and not the fact that injuries occur. And that negligence must be 'in whole *or in part*,' the cause of the injury." (Citing *Ellis* v. *Union Pacific R. Co.*, 329 U. S. 649, (91 L. Ed. 572). (R. 7). (Emphasis added).

3. When "there is no negligence on the part of the employer which caused or *contributed* to the injury, such employer is not liable therefor." (Citing *Atchison, Topeka & Sante Fe R. Co.* v. *Toops*, 281 U. S. (fol. 17) 351, (71 L. Ed. 896), and many Georgia cases.) (R. 7). (Emphasis added).

4. The Court took clearly into account the decisions of this Court abolishing "every vestige" of the common law doctrine of assumption of risk and making the doctrine of contributory negligence a matter for the jury in assessing the amount of damage. The Georgia Court of Appeals said: "The cases dealing with the abolition of the doctrine of assumption of risk in actions arising under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, and the effect of contributory negligence under the Act, *are necessarily predicated upon a showing of negligence on the part of the employer*, and are inapplicable to the case at bar." (R. 8). (Emphasis added).

The petition and decision in this case cannot conjure up any novel question. Indeed, presented here is a clear case where a state court has laid a petition (construed according to its unvarying practice), alongside the legal yardstick supplied by this Court, and has found the petition defective. This Court is

not even presented here with a case where it could draw different "allowable inferences" from evidence passed upon by a lower court. (See the concurring opinion of Mr. Justice Frankfurter in *Wilkerson* v. *McCarthy, supra.*) For while this Court may properly reach a different conclusion from that of a lower court as to whether particular evidence sets out a case of negligence, the construction of pleadings in a state court is a matter for the court of the state. And can it be seriously contended that a petition sets out a cause of action under any decision of this Court when the petition merely shows:

a. A large clinker in a railroad yard; and

b. That it was there through no fault of the railroad, and

c. That the railroad did not know either actually or impliedly that the clinker was there.

We respectfully submit, therefore, that this is certainly no case for the granting of the writ of certiorari.

Argument

1. *The Georgia Court of Appeals gave the petition in this case a normal construction in accordance with the unvarying rule of practice in this State to construe pleadings against the pleader.*

Perhaps the petition in this case would under rules of practice prevailing, for example, in a Federal District Court, have been sufficient to state a cause of action. Some rules of pleading in the Federal Courts are considerably more liberal than those in Georgia, (see Rule 8 Federal Rules of Court Procedure). It may well be that the Federal Rules are very preferable, but Georgia has not changed the common law rule that pleadings (especially on general demurrer) are construed against the pleader, (See 49 *Corpus Juris*, p. 105). The Georgia rule does not vary depending on whether a case is brought under a Federal

statute, a State statute or a common law right. The rule is the same for all pleaders—plaintiffs and defendants—and it applies in all cases.

The petition at bar was not subjected to a more vigorous construction because it was brought under the Federal Employers' Liability Act. A very cursory survey of Georgia cases will show that the rule of construing pleadings strictly and against the pleader has been very rigidly enforced. In *Krueger* v. *MacDougald*, 148 Ga. 429, (96 S. E. 867), Atkinson, J. declared that the "elementary rule of construction, as applied to a pleading, that it is to be construed most strongly against the pleader; and that if an inference unfavorable to the party claiming a right under such a pleading may be fairly drawn from the facts stated therein, such inference will prevail in determining the rights of the parties . . . is so universally recognized that it is unnecessary to cite authority for it or to state the reasons upon which it is based."

This principle of construction means in Georgia, amongst other things, "that where two matters are pleaded in the disjunctive, one of which is good and the other not, the petition is to be treated as pleading no more than the latter." *Doyal* v. *Russell*, 183 Ga. 518 (189 S. E. 32).

It is especially important to notice that in setting forth the specific grounds of negligence charged against respondent, the petitioner did not allege any negligence with respect to the presence of the particular offending clinker in the yards. (Par. 17 of petition, R. 3). In Georgia, it has been repeatedly held that a plaintiff cannot recover on other acts of the defendant which, while even set forth in the petition, are not therein alleged as negligence. See *Charleston and Western Carolina Rwy. Co.* v. *Patton*, 22 Ga. App. 554, (96 S. E. 504).

The construction given the petition at bar is supported by a long line of precedents arising from common law cases. The

gist of these cases is that the presence of a dangerous object on the premises of a store, a hotel, or a passenger platform, by which an invitee is injured, does not of itself make out a case of negligence. The petition must, if it is to resist a general demurrer, allege that the object was there with the knowledge of the defendant or that it had remained there for a sufficient length of time so that he ought to have known of its presence.

In *Cook* v. *Kroger Baking & Grocery Co.*, 65 Ga. App. 141, (15 S. E. (2nd) 531), the plaintiff stepped on a slick place allegedly caused by a carrot top which had been mashed under foot in defendant's store. The petition alleged, "The defendant invited her into the store, and it was its duty to see that the floor was kept clean through inspection and, in failing so to do and in *allowing* it to become slippery, the defendant failed to exercise ordinary care." (Emphasis added).

To these allegations the defendant interposed a general demurrer. The Court of Appeals upheld the action of the lower court in sustaining this general demurrer, and in its decision said:

> "The innocence of the person injured does not necessarily establish the negligence of the defendant. The defendant cannot be liable unless he owed to the person injured a duty which he neglected. The defendant is not an insurer. Here no active negligence, no structural defects, and no actual knowledge of the defendant that the carrot top was on the floor of the defendant's grocery store is alleged."

In *Castleberry* v. *Fox*, 29 Ga. App. 35 (113 S. E. 110), the court reviewed a non-suit granted in the lower court. In such a review, all the inferences were in favor of the plaintiff. Yet the court held that where the guest of a hotel slipped and was injured on a banana peel on the stairway, negligence is not shown merely by evidence that the peel was "practically the color of the floor—a dark color."

To the same effect see, *Atlanta and West Point R. Co.* v. *Hyde*, 45 Ga. App. 548, (165 S. E. 466); *Brown* v. *S. H. Kress Co.*, 66 Ga. App. 242, (17 S. E. (2nd) 758), and *Ellis* v. *Southern Grocery Stores, Inc.*, 46 Ga. App. 254, (167 S. E. 324).

2. *The Federal Employers' Liability Act having conferred on the State Courts a jurisdiction concurrent with that of the Federal Courts in actions under the statute, and having made no regulation of the practice in those actions, the practice in an action under Title 45 U. S. C. A., Sects 51 to 60, is regulated by the law of the forum.*

The above principle of law is well established and frequently asserted. See, *Cen. Vermont R. Co.* v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507, (59 L. Ed. 1433); *C. C. O. R. Co.* v. *DeAtley*, 241 U. S. 310, (60 L. Ed. 1016); *Henry Brinkmeier* v. *Missouri Pac. R. Co.*, 224 U. S. 268, (56 L. Ed. 758). The law of the forum applies to matters of the admissibility of evidence and procedure, *DeLong* v. *Maine Cen. R. Co.*, (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine) 6 A. 2nd 431.

The law of the forum governs, for example, the question whether a suit is still pending in the state courts. And though the decision that a suit was not pending ended a cause of action which had on a previous trial resulted in a $30,000 verdict, no substantial right under the Federal Employers' Liability Act was affected. See *Victor Herb* v. *Norman B. Pitcairn*, 324 U. S. 117, (89 L. Ed. 789).

In *Tipton* v. *A. T. & S. Fe R. Co.*, 298 U. S. 141, (80 L. Ed. 1091), this Court, speaking of the Safety Appliance Act, 45 U. S. C. A. Secs. 11-16, said that it modified "the enforcement, by civil action, of the employee's common law right in only one aspect, namely, by withdrawing the defense of assumption of risk. They do not touch the common or statute law of a state governing venue, limitations, contributory negligence, or recovery for death by wrongful act."

Verdicts in state courts may be rendered in Federal Employers' Liability Act cases by less than a unanimous jury, though the Seventh Amendment to the Federal Constitution guarantees a trial in the Federal Courts by a jury acting according to the course of the common law, that is, by a unanimous verdict. *Minn. & St. L. R. Co.* v. *Bombolis*, 241 U. S. 211, (60 L. Ed. 961). There the Chief Justice pointed out that in enforcing a Federally created right, the state court was not "to be treated as a Federal Court, deriving its authority not from the state creating it, but from the United States."

In *Mondou* v. *N. Y., N. H. & H. R. Co.*, 223 U. S. 1, (56 L. Ed. 327), this Court, while expressly holding that a state court was bound to take jurisdiction of an action brought under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, said that under the Act there was "involved any attempt by Congress to enlarge or regulate the jurisdiction of the state courts, or to control or affect their modes of procedure . . . "

In *Cen. of Ga. R. Co.* v. *Jones*, 152 Ga. 92 (108 S. E. 618), 28 Ga. App. (110 S. E. 914), 258, certiorari denied, 260 U. S. 729, (67 L. Ed. 485), the Supreme Court of Georgia, speaking through Justice George (as he then was) held that where an injured employee "died pending an action by him, in which his petition failed to show whether his action was based on the Federal Employers' Liability Act or the state statute, and his administratrix, after being made a party to the suit filed an amendment alleging a right of action under the Federal Act, it was held, that, although Sec. 9 of the Federal Employers' Liability Act (36 Stat. at L. 291, chap. 143; Comp. Stat. Sec. 8665, 8 Fed. Stat. Anno. 2d ed. p. 1378) provided for the survival of an injured employee's right of action to his personal representative, a state statute prohibiting the allowance of an amendment setting up a 'new and distinct cause of action . . . unless expressly provided for by law,' was "nevertheless operative to defeat the allowance of such an amendment."

Justice George said:

> "It is also agreed that when an act of Congress in regard to a subject within the domain of Congress creates a right upon condition, compliance with the condition is essential, and that the State, under the guise of procedure, can not take away or affect a substantive right created by Congress. The application of State rules of procedure and practice, under the peculiar facts of this case, will result in some inconvenience. Nevertheless we are of the opinion that no substantive right of defense under the Federal act will be affected by a proper application of the rules of procedure prevailing in this State. We are clear, however, that Congress not only did not attempt to regulate matters of procedure in the State court, but that it had no power to do so. *Small* v. *Slocumb*, 112 Ga. 279 (37 S. E. 481, 53 L. R. A. 130, 81 Am. S. R. 50); see also *Ga. So. etc. R. Co.* v. *Smiley*, 151 Ga. 795 (108 S. E. 273). When Congress creates a right and confers jurisdiction on the Courts of the State to enforce the right, it adopts the prevailing rules of procedure in the State. As was held in *Mondou* v. *New York etc. R. Co.*, *supra*, the 'systems of jurisprudence of the State and of the United States, together form one system which constitutes the law of the land for the State.'"

The rule is further refined at 35 Am. Juris. p. 875:

> "Accordingly, the state practice is held to be determinative of questions concerning the sufficiency of a pleading to state a cause of action . . ."

Substantially the same rule has been stated at 25 *Corpus Juris* 944:

> "The decisions of state courts as to questions of state practice or procedure or the sufficiency, construction, etc., of pleadings are not reviewable by the supreme court, even though the action is brought under a federal statute."

This rule often works in favor of plaintiffs. In *Louisville & Nashville R. Co.* v. *Stewart's Admx.* (Court of Appeals of Ken-

tucky), 161 S. W. 557, the petitioner brought a complaint which charged only in general terms that decedent's death occurred through the negligence of the agents and employees of the railroad. The negligence was not spelled out in detail. A demurrer was interposed. The Court in passing on the question raised thereby said:

> "It is urged by appellant that the demurrer to the petition should have been sustained because the plaintiff was proceeding under a federal statute and should have been required to set up with particularity the acts of negligence complained of as he would have been required to do in the federal court; *but the Act of Congress does not undertake to prescribe the mode of procedure where the action is pending in the state courts, except in certain particulars not here involved. So that, the general allegation of negligence being held sufficient in this state prior to enactment of the Employers' Liability Act, such a plea will be held good even when proceeding under that act.*" (Emphasis added).

In *Dewing* v. *N. Y. Cen. R. Co.* (Supreme Judicial Court of Mass.), 183 N. E. 754, the Court held:

> "The plaintiff having waived the second count of his declaration, which was drawn under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (U. S. C., title 45, Sec. 51, et seq. (45 USCA Secs. 51-59), obtained a verdict from the jury upon a first count, which alleged merely that 'he was greatly injured by reason of the negligence of the defendant, and has suffered great pain and body anguish (sic) of mind.' This vague allegation, under our practice which in this respect controls, cannot be construed as stating a case under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, but must be deemed a count upon the common law."

It is appreciated by respondent's counsel that the state court may not under the rule we are presenting here diminish or destroy any federal right or defense. It would clearly not be permissible for a state court to apply more rigid procedural rules against plaintiffs suing under a Federal right than in cases

brought under some state statute or the common law. This Court has apparently regarded this test of good faith as a touchstone. See *Vandalia R. Co.* v. *Ind. Ex rel. South Bend*, 207 U. S. 359, (52 L. Ed. 246); *Kentucky Union Company* v. *Kentucky*, 219 U. S. 140, (55 L. Ed. 137); *Lee* v. *Cen. of Ga. R. Co. et al.*, 252 U. S. 109, (64 L. Ed. 482), where Mr. Justice Brandeis dealt with a Georgia decision which refused to permit joinder of a railroad and an engineer as defendants in an action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act. He declared this a matter of "pleading and practice"; and that the Georgia courts had not discriminated against the plaintiff appears from the fact that the Supreme Court of Georgia had applied the same rule in other cases under the State Employers' Liability Act.

Mr. Justice Holmes dealt with a similar proposition in *Nevada, California, Oregon Ry. Co. v. Burrus*, 244 U. S. 103, (61 L. Ed. 1019):

> "Upon the question whether a claim of immunity under a statute of the United States has been asserted in the proper manner under the state system of pleading and practice 'the decision of the state court is binding upon this court, when it is clear, as it is in this case, that such decision is not rendered in a spirit of evasion, for the purpose of defeating the claim of Federal right.'"

It is not asserted that in this case the Georgia Court has applied a different rule of construction than is uniformly applied to actions at common law and under state statutes.

Indeed, counsel for petitioner (pp. 9-11 petitioner's brief) generally applauds the record of the Georgia Appellate Courts in dealing with Federal Employers' Liability Act cases. Counsel, in fact, suggests that the decision in this case rests upon the courts' *misinterpretation* of the case of *Lee* v. *Cen. R. Co.*, 88 Ga. 231, (12 S. E. 307). (Page 9 petitioner's brief). However, it might be recalled that the opinion in this case *does not cite* and is not predicated upon the Lee case.

Nor would this case be controlled by *Southern Ry. Co.* v. *Puckett*, 16 Ga. App. 551, (86 S. E. 809), (petitioner's brief, page 10), where the court was dealing with allegations of a "cinder pile."

Nor is the decision in this case in conflict with *Cen. of Ga. Ry. Co.* v. *Goens*, 30 Ga. App. 770, (119 S. E. 669), (petitioner's brief p. 11), where the proximate cause of the injury was arch brick and cinders placed within 2½ feet of the track by the negligence of defendant's agents, (petitioner's brief, p. 11). Nor is the decision herein in conflict with *Gay* v. *Osteen*, 56 Ga. App. 224, (192 S. E. 539), (petitioner's brief, page 11), where it was alleged that a "car inspector employed by the defendant had . . . removed a defective brake shoe . . . and instead of taking it out of the yards . . . negligently threw it down between the tracks."

We earnestly assert that these Georgia cases are not applicable to any argument here. The Georgia Court of Appeals decision is not predicated upon them. The Georgia Court's opinion (R. 5-8) is based clearly upon Federal cases or state cases which hold that the basis of action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act is *some* negligence of the employer. But the pleadings at bar alleged no negligence against the defendant with respect to the object which it is alleged was the proximate cause of petitioner's injury.

3. *The mere allegation that a large clinker has come to lie momentarily in a railroad yard without any allegations attributing the clinker's presence to the defendant does not set out a cause of action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act.*

Negligence remains the basis of action under the Federal Employers' Liability Act: *Brady* v. *Southern Ry. Co.*, 320 U. S. 476, (88 L. Ed. 239). As long as negligence is the necessary ingredient, the defendant must have been guilty of some fault before there can be a recovery. The Federal Employers' Liability Act

did not change that rudiment of common law liability which Mr. Justice Holmes set out in the *Common Law*, (38th Printing, Little Brown and Company, 1945), pp. 94 and 95:

> "The general principle of our law is that loss from accident must lie where it falls, and this principle is not affected by the fact that a human being is the instrument of misfortune. But relatively to a given human being anything is accident which he could not fairly have been expected to contemplate as possible, and therefore to avoid. In the language of the late Chief Justice Nelson of New York: 'No case or principle can be found, or if found can be maintained, subjecting an individual to liability for an act done without fault on his part . . . All the cases concede that an injury arising from an inevitable accident, or, which in law or reason is the same thing, from an act that ordinary human care and foresight are unable to guard against, is but the misfortune of the sufferer, and lays no foundation for legal responsibility.'"

A considerable number of cases have arisen under the Federal Employers' Liability Act in which plaintiffs have stepped and have been injured on clinkers, stones, bottles and sticks alongside railroad tracks. These cases show that before liability of the railroad is established it must appear that the debris was there by the defendant's negligence or that it remained there with the defendant's actual or implied knowledge. In a very recent case, *Waller* v. *Northern Pac. Terminal Co. of Oregon*, 166 Pac. 2d 488, (certiorari denied, -- U. S. —, (67 S. Ct. 45)), an employee allegedly slipped and fell on a stick in the terminal yards. There was a verdict and judgment for the plaintiff, which the appellate court reversed because:

> "Assuming that the plaintiff slipped by stepping on a stick, there is not a scintilla of evidence to indicate how long the stick had been there. From all that appears from the evidence, it may have fallen from the train which the plaintiff was boarding."

It is of interest to note that in the Waller case there was evidence that debris did collect each day and that the yards were cleaned once daily. If the plaintiff were injured by debris collected within the course of one day, apparently the accident happened without the fault of the defendant. In the Brown case herein, there is no allegation that the clinker (or for that matter the "debris" which is wholly irrelevant, as we have shown) was in the yard for one second, one minute, one hour or one day. The plaintiff's untimed allegations construed against him certainly do not carry the inference that what injured him had been in the yard for as long as one day. We again stress that the plaintiff herein had ample time before his petition was dismissed to meet this issue. He had not fallen on a technicality, but upon the weakness of his case.

Cases cited in petitioner's brief predicate liability *upon fault*. For example, in *Henwood* v. *Cheney*, 156 F. 2d 392 (8th Cir. 1946), (petitioner's brief, p. 15), the negligence charged was in permitting oil on and near the tracks where the plaintiff worked for a period of *several years*.

In *Cin., N. O. & T. Ry. Co.* v. *Davis*, 293 F. 481, (6th C. C. A.) (petitioner's brief, p. 12), the defendant was charged with "throwing and distributing" the crossties in the place the petitioner worked. Herein, no charge is made that *the defendant* placed the cinder in the petitioner's place of work.

In *B. & O. R. Co.* v. *Fletcher*, 300 F. 318 (6th Cir. 1924), (petitioner's brief, p. 13), the hoop on which plaintiff stepped was rusty and there was evidence on which the jury could have found the defendant had actual or implied knowledge of the presence of the hoop in the yard.

In *C. B. & Q. R. Co.* v. *Kelly*, 74 Fed. 2d 809 (8th Cir. 1934) (petitioner's brief, p. 14), the negligence charged was the presence of weeds growing over the top of rails. Of course, weeds

do not grow momentarily. The issue of knowledge was, therefore, in the case.

While we make no attempt to read more than is intended into the cases in which this Court has recently denied certiorari, it would seem permissible to infer the following without fear of contradiction:

1. Liability under the Act is predicated upon fault.

2. Not every petition and not every compilation of evidence constitutes a jury question.

The Georgia courts, as petitioner's counsel demonstrates (petitioner's brief, pp. 10 and 11), are not given to withholding doubtful cases from a jury.

The most cursory survey of the recent Federal Employers' Liability Act cases in which this Court had denied certiorari will show that:

Where a place of working is rendered unsafe without the employer's knowledge, even a verdict based on injury in that place cannot stand. *Lasagna* v. *McCarthy, et al*, 177 P. 2d 734, certiorari denied 332 U. S. 829, (92 L. Ed. 403).

Where an accident occurs *solely* through the negligence of the plaintiff, a verdict in his favor must be upset. *Wolfe* v. *Henwood*, 162 F. 2d 998, certiorari denied 332 U. S. 773, (92 L. Ed. 357).

Even where there is some possibility that the plaintiff intestate was killed through the fault of the railroad, yet where because of lack of knowledge of the true facts surrounding the injury, no fault is shown, there is no liability against the defendant. Apparently, it is up to the plaintiff to make the case of negligence against the defendant. *Cowdrick* v. *Pa. R. Co.*, 39 A. 2d 98, certiorari denied 323 U. S. 799, (89 L. Ed. 637).

Conclusion

The Georgia Court of Appeals has impinged on none of the aintiff's Federal rights. This decision has established no ecedent which will hamper or diminish the opportunities of ture petitioners under the Act. The case presents no novel estion. It is highly unlikely that a petitioner will refuse to nend his petition to set out facts showing negligence, if such cts do exist. In any event, we do not believe that this Court ll wish to do what the petitioner in effect urges—that is, ange the rule of strictly construing pleadings in the Georgia ourts in Federal Employers' Liability Act cases. It might be eful to say, in conclusion, that if this petitioner had brought to e Court a meritorious case and had plead it unambiguously, en the rule of strict construction would have possibly re-ounded to his advantage in a consideration of defendant's an-ver. The rule itself is impartial; it does not work for de-ndant's alone. But right or wrong, the rule is the law of the rum of this suit; it is universally applied and petitioner was t surprised by it. We, therefore, respectfully pray that this plication for the writ of certiorari be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

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SUPREME COURT, U.S.
FILED
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SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1949

No. 43

RICHARD J. BROWN,

Petitioner,

vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent.

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

PETITION FOR CERTIORARI FILED MARCH 18, 1949

CERTIORARI GRANTED MAY 2, 1949

BRIEF ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS

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SUBJECT INDEX

	Page
Questions Presented	1
Statement of the Case	2
Summary of Argument	2
Application of State Rules of Procedure	2
A Distinction to Be Noted	2
Another Distinction to Be Noted	3
The Rule of Law in the Court of Appeals Decision	5
Granting of the Writ	5
Argument	
Georgia Rules of Pleading	6
Federal Recognition of the Georgia Rule of Construction	9
Questions Now Before the Court	9
Law of the Forum in Federal Employer's Liability Act Cases	9
Absence of Federal Question	10
No New Question	10
Decisions Under the Conformity Act	11
This Case Presents No Conflict with Decisions of This Court	13
Granting of the Writ	14
Conclusion	16

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

	Page
American Jurisprudence, Vol. 54, Sec. 243, page 881	10
A. C. L. R. R. Co. v. *Mims*, 242 U. S. 532; 61 L. Ed. 476	10
Bailey v. *Cent. Vt. R. Co.*, 319 U. S. 350; 87 L. Ed. 1444 at 1448	15
Bellamy v. *Georgia Power Co.*, 70 Ga. App. 175, 27 S. E. (2d) 783	7
Brady v. *Southern Ry. Co.*, 320 U. S. 476; 88 L. Ed. 239	13, 14
Bryson v. *Gallo*, 180 Fed. 70	12
Butler v. *City of Dublin*, 191 Ga. 551, 555; 13 S. E. (2d) 362	8
Cedartown Cotton Co. v. *Miles*, 2 Ga. App. 79, 58 S. E. 289	8
Cen. Vermont R. Co. v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507, 59 L. Ed. 1433	6, 10
Chester Hedgebeth v. *State of North Carolina*, 334 U. S. 806; 92 L. Ed. 1739	15
C. & O. R. Co. v. *DeAtley*, 241 U. S. 310; 60 L. Ed. 1016	10
Connally v. *Std. Oil Co.*, 264 Fed. 383	12
Cooper v. *Portmer Brewing Co.*, 112 Ga. 894, 38 S. E. 91	7
Corpus Juris, Vol. 49, page 105-120	8
Driskell v. *Powell*, 67 Fed. (2), 484	9
Eckenrode v. *Penn. R. Co.*, — U. S.—; 93 L. Ed. 64	14
Furness, W. & Co. v. *Yang-Tsze Ins. Asso.*, 242 U. S. 430; 61 L. Ed. 409	14
Gainesville, etc. Ry. Co. v. *Austin*, 127 Ga. 120, 56 S. E. 254	7
Hardin v. *Baynes*, 198 Ga. 683, 32 S. E. (2d) 384	8
Hartford Life Ins. Co. v. *Johnson*, 249 U. S. 490; 63 L. Ed. 722	10

Page

Henry Brinkmeier v. Mo. Pac. R. Co., 224 U. S. 268; 56 L. Ed. 758 10
Hunter v. *Texas Elec. Ry. Co.*, 332 U. S. 827; 92 L. Ed. 402 14
Isaac N. E. Allen v. *Alleghany Co.*, 196 U. S. 458; 49 L. Ed. 551 11
Lavendar v. *Kurn*, 327 U. S. 645; 90 L. Ed. 916 3
Layne & Bowler Corp. v. *Western Well Works, Inc.*, 261 U. S. 387; 67 L. Ed. 712 14
Mac Creary v. *Action*, 29 Ga. App. 162, 165; 114 S. E. 230 8
Northern Pac. R. Co. v. *Payne*, 119 U. S. 561; 30 L. Ed. 513 12
Old Colony Trust Co. v. *Atlanta B. & A. R. Co.*, 264 Fed. 355 9
Radio Station WOW, Inc. v. *Johnson*, 326 U. S. 120; 89 L. Ed. 2092 11
Renfroe v. *Colquitt*, 74 Ga. 618-620 8
Reynolds v. *A. C. L. Ry. Co.* — U. S. —; 93 L. Ed. 475 14
Tiller v. *A. C. L. R. Co.*, 318 U. S. 54; 87 L. Ed. 610 13
U. S. v. *Parker*, 120 U. S. 89; 30 L. Ed. 601 12
United States v. *Rimer, et al.*, 220 U. S. 547; 55 L. Ed. 578 14
Waller v. *Northern Pacific Terminal Co. of Ore.*, 166 Pac. (2) 488; 329 U. S. 742; 67 S. Ct. 45 13
Wilkerson v. *McCarthy*, — U. S. —; 93 L. Ed. 403 15
Williams v. *Smith*, 71 Ga. App. 632, 637; 31 S. E. (2d) 873 7

STATUTES CITED

Federal Employer's Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A., Secs. 51, et seq.
Civil Code of Georgia, Secs. 81-1301
U. S. C. A. 28, Sec. 1257 (3); (old title 28—Secs. 344-724)

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1949

No. 43

RICHARD J. BROWN,

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vs.

WESTERN RAILWAY OF ALABAMA,

Respondent.

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PETITION FOR CERTIORARI FILED MARCH 18, 1949
CERTIORARI GRANTED MAY 2, 1949

BRIEF ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENTS

Questions Presented

The Respondent herein has filed a brief resisting the application for the writ of certiorari. Facts and authority there briefed will not be fully stated or argued herein. Respondent, therefore, will limit itself to the following points:

1. Whether the well established state rules of procedure shall continue to apply in actions brought in state courts based on the provisions of the Federal Employer's Liability Act (45 U. S. C. A. Sec. 51, et seq.)?

2. Whether the following is a correct principle of substantive law under the decisions of this Court, applying the Federal Employer's Liability Act?

> "The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence,"

where, "it is not shown how or for what length of time the clinker was in the yard," and where it is not charged that the defendant or its agents placed the clinker there. (R. 8.)

3. Whether the Court has improvidently granted this writ of certiorari?

Statement of the Case

We have stated the case with particularity on pages 3 through 6 of Respondent's Brief opposing the granting of the writ. It will suffice to repeat that petitioner's declaration in this case did not state that the offending clinker on which he allegedly fell had come to lie in the joint yards of the respondent and another company through the negligence of respondent nor did the declaration state that the respondent knew the clinker was in the yard nor that it had remained there for any length of time whatever so as to show the respondent had constructive knowledge of the clinker's presence. The petition also did not allege any grounds of Respondent's negligence (absolutely required under Georgia practice) with respect to the particular clinker on which petitioner allegedly fell.

Georgia practice, as shown in Respondent's prior brief in this cause, is to construe pleadings strictly against the pleader; to require the pleader to plead the *factual* allegations on which he lays his claims rather than to stand on conclusions, and to allege the ground of the particular negligence on which he expects to recover. These requirements are particularly stressed when a petition is attacked by demurrer.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Application of State Rules of Procedure

A Distinction to be Noted

This Court has, though not unanimously, come to accept an

inference theory in Federal Employer's Liability Act cases under which jury verdicts based on inferences and speculation from evidence on trial have been allowed to stand. See *Lavender v. Kurn*, 327 U. S. 645, 90 L. Ed. 916.

We do not challenge this doctrine in this case; for this case does not in any way involve this doctrine.

It is one thing to *permit* a jury of reasonable and fair-minded men to draw inferences from *facts as established by the evidence* but quite another *to require* that state Court Judges *as a matter of law* must draw inferences from facts not alleged in a petition.

Yet, this is the novel principle by which this Court is being asked to sustain the Petitioner in this case.

The position of the Respondent is simply this: Given under the law the choice of three forums (State Courts of Alabama and Georgia and the Federal District Court), the Petitioner chose to sue in Georgia. The Georgia rules of practice and procedure apply to suits brought in State Courts under the Federal Employer's Liability Act. These rules are flexible, permit easy amendment, and allow petitioners to plead alternative and inconsistent theories and place no legal or moral onus upon pleaders for untrue allegations (unless verified, which these were not).

Favored by these liberal reforms of the basic common law rules of pleading, the petitioner complains of a firmly established Georgia rule of practice and pleading: Pleadings are construed strictly against the pleader. This applies to petitions but equally to answers. The rule is time honored and obviously well known to Petitioner's able Georgia Counsel.

The principle issue now in this case is whether Federal Rules of practice and procedure are to be applied in state court actions under the Federal Employer's Liability Act.

Another Distinction to be Noted

Respondent recognizes that no State Court may deprive Peti-

tioner of a substantive Federal right under the Federal Employer's Liability Act. But the Courts of Georgia have impinged upon none of this Petitioner's substantive rights. The decision complained of in the Georgia Court of Appeals does not restrict the liberal interpretation of the Federal Employer's Liability Act; it does not enlarge the requirements of proof in actions under the Act; it is merely one of hundreds of decisions applying a well known Georgia and common law rule of practice.

Such rules of practice as that Petitioner complains of do not prevent or hinder petitioners in the slightest from recovering in every case where they have a meritorious claim and are willing to plead it—even alternately and inconsistently.

Surely it is not too much to insist that a claimant under a Tort Act based on the theory of liability in negligence must set out in his pleadings allegations, which, if proved, entitle a recovery. And the State practice is surely fair which permits petitioner to say whatever he pleases, however he wishes to, and in as many alternate ways as he desires. Rules of practice are, of course, required to present the facts and to frame the issues for trial. But all rules, of necessity, interpose requirements between the petitioner and his recovery. But these requirements do not *ipso facto* deprive plaintiffs of substantive rights. Not unless they enlarge the requirements of proving a prima facie case or in other ways restrict the effect of alleged facts to obtain a legally justified recovery. But the Georgia rules of pleading and practice have not whittled away a single right of this petitioner. He has become impaled not upon the Georgia rules of pleading but upon his failure to comply with them. Under the Federal Employer's Liability Act, a cause of action cannot be inferred from an accident, nor does a petitioner have a right to have a jury infer from his petition. The question of what inferences may be drawn by a jury arises in those cases where admissible evidence has been presented under allegations which present a cause of action.

The Rule of Law in the Court of Appeals Decision

As long as negligence remains the basis of liability under the Federal Employer's Liability Act, it is submitted that no legal fault can be found with the substantive decision of the Court of Appeals in this cause. The following is the rule of that decision:

> "The mere presence of a large clinker in a railroad yard cannot be said to constitute an act of negligence" where "it is not shown how or for what length of time the clinker was in the yard." (R. 8.)

The Granting of the Writ

Unless this Court has in mind the reversal of the hitherto well established rule that practice under the Federal Employer's Liability Act is regulated by the law of the forum, there is presented in this writ no matter of special concern or importance.

The Georgia Court of Appeals did not announce in its decision a single new rule of Georgia practice nor did it vary one whit from any announced decision of this Court involving the Federal Employer's Liability Act.

The Georgia Court explicitly stated:

> "This is an action . . . controlled by the provisions of the Federal Employer's Liability Act, 45 U. S. C. A., Section 51, et seq. Although brought in a State Court, *all matters of substance are controlled by Federal Law.*" (R. 7.) (Emphasis added.)

The Court very carefully took into account the decisions of this Court abolishing "every vestige" of the common law doctrine of assumption of risk and making the question of contributory negligence a jury consideration in assessing damages. (R. 8.)

For a more elaborate discussion of the questions involved in

this appeal, please see pages 9 through 11 of Respondent's brief heretofore filed in this cause.

It cannot be contended that a petition sets out a cause of action under any decision of this Court when the petition merely shows:

a. A large clinker in a railroad yard; and

b. That it was there through no act of the railroad nor any of its agents; and

c. That the railroad did not know, either actually or impliedly, that the clinker was there.

These are precisely the facts which the Georgia Court found alleged in this petition, stripping away all the legal conclusions which yielded to the demurrers.

We respectfully submit that unless the Court has in mind to require that the State Courts use Federal rules of practice in Federal Employer's Liability cases, that this writ should now be dismissed as having been improvidently granted.

ARGUMENT

Georgia Rules of Pleading

We do not argue the merits of the Georgia Rules of Pleading and Practice. It may well be that the Federal Rules are preferable. But preferable or not, the Georgia Courts have, under the mandates of this Court, applied their own rules of practice in cases arising under the Federal Employer's Liability Act. See, *Cen. Vermont R. Co.* v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507, 59 L. Ed. 1433.

The Georgia Rules of Pleading allow amendment "at any stage of the cause, as a matter of right" and "in all respects whether in matters of form or substance." See Georgia Civil Code of 1933, Section 81-1301. This is a liberal rule viewed from the common law and it is seen to be especially so when

one considers the uncabined latitude with which plaintiffs can allege their facts:

> ". . . and a plaintiff is not subject to penalty for alleging facts which he knows to be untrue at the time he makes them, where they are not made under oath."
>
> *Bellamy* v. *Georgia Power Co.*,
> 70 Ga. App. 175, 27 S. E. 2d 783.

In Georgia it is permissible for a petition to contain two or more counts, each of which refers to the same cause of action but differing from each other in substantial particulars as to the details of the transaction. See, *Gainesville, etc. Ry. Co.* v. *Austin*, 127 Ga. 120, 56 S. E. 254.

In fact, it is permissible to embrace in one petition in different counts as many causes of action as the plaintiff sees proper, provided they are all of a similar nature. *Cooper* v. *Portmer Brewing Co.*, 112 Ga. 894, 38 S. E. 91.

And not only is it permissible, but it is general practice to allege in one petition in separate counts, the breach of obligation in different ways, when by doing so the plaintiff's chances of recovery would be strengthened. *Williams* v. *Smith*, 71 Ga. App., 632, 637; 31 S. E. (2) 873.

Under permissible and usual Georgia Practice, a plaintiff with any case at all can get it heard by merely pleading the facts or the supposed facts. Substance is never under these liberal rules sacrificed to form; though at times truth is sometimes sacrificed for imagination. The only restraint upon the plaintiff is the ever present consideration that some day he must face a jury with any supposititious allegations in the petition.

On the other hand, having given the plaintiff the freedom to plead as he will, the Courts construe these pleadings strictly against him. A petition, especially on demurrer, must satisfy the following requirements:

(a) The petition must allege facts with a reasonable definiteness and certainty. *Cedartown Cotton Co.* v. *Miles*, 2 *Ga. App.* 79; 58 S. E. 289. Applying this principle to the question of implied knowledge of unsafe working conditions, the Georgia Courts have held that the allegation "Said fact should have been known to the defendant . . ." as a mere conclusion and does not satisfy the requirement of reasonable certainty. *Id.*

(b) Pleading is not to be ambiguous. The penalty for ambiguous pleading is that it is construed strictly against the pleader. *Hardin v. Baynes*, 198 Ga. 683; 32 S. E. (2) 384. Ambiguity signifies, amongst other things, "Of doubtful or uncertain nature; wanting clearness or definiteness; difficulty to comprehend or distinguish; of doubtful purport; open to various interpretations." *Mac Creary* v. *Action*, 29 Ga. App. 162, 165; 114 S. E. 230. The Georgia Supreme Court has consistently pronounced the common law rule that when a pleading is susceptible of two meanings that shall be taken which is most unfavorable to the pleader. See *Renfroe* v. *Colquitt*, 74 Ga. 618.

(c) In negligence suits, it is not sufficient to allege the negligence in general terms. The plaintiff may recover only on the specific grounds of negligence charged. In the case at Bar, it will be recalled that the plaintiff made no allegation of negligence regarding the clinker on which he allegedly stumbled.

(d) It is a fundamental rule of practice in Georgia that facts and not legal conclusions must be alleged. *Butler* v. *City of Dublin*, 191 Ga. 551, 555; 13 S. E. (2) 362.

The rules of construction of pleading in effect in Georgia are, of course, basically the common law rules. (See 49 *Corpus Juris*, p. 105.) That part of the doctrine applicable to this case is well stated in 49 *Corpus Juris*, p. 120:

> "Where the pleading is silent regarding a material fact, the presumptions are against the pleader and no intendment can be made in his favor. Thus a material fact, if not alleged, is presumed not to exist."

Federal Recognition of the Georgia Rule of Construction

The Georgia rule of strict construction of pleadings against the pleader has been noted and applied in Federal Courts. See *Old Colony Trust Co.* v. *Atlanta B. & A. R. Co.*, 264 Fed. 355.

In *Driskell* v. *Powell*, 67 Fed. (2), 484, Circuit Judge Sibley on an appeal from a decision rendered in a Georgia Federal District Court stated:

> "Pleadings at law are to be construed on demurrer strictly against the pleader. It is to be presumed that the pleader has put his case in the most favorable light possible, and omissions of facts important to be alleged is taken to mean that they do not exist." (Citing numerous Georgia cases.)

The Georgia rule of strict construction invoked in the case now before this Bar is universally applied, and its application to the petitioner's complaint was merely standard procedure.

Question Now Before the Court

The Georgia Rules of Practice, requiring the construction of pleadings strictly against the pleader are well established. Right or wrong, these Georgia Rules are enforced in Georgia Courts in all cases in those forums. The question is whether these rules of practice are to apply to cases under the Federal Employer's Liability Act?

The Law of the Forum in Federal Employer's Liability Act Cases

Hitherto, it has been repeatedly said that the Federal Employer's Liability Act having conferred on the State Courts a jurisdiction concurrent with that of the Federal Courts in actions under the statute, and having made no regulation of practice in those actions, the practice in an action under *Title* 45 *U. S. C. A.*, Sects. 51 to 60, is regulated by the law of the

forum. See *Cen. Vt. R. Co.* v. *White*, 238 U. S. 507; 59 *L. Ed.* 1433; *C. & O. R. Co.* v. *DeAtley*, 241 U. S. 310; 60 *L. Ed.* 1016; and *Henry Brinkmeier* v. *Mo. Pac. R. Co.*, 224 U. S. 268; 56 *L. Ed.* 758.

This principle does not seem to have been hitherto challenged and the application of the doctrine is to be seen from the authorities and instances of its application outlined in pages 14 through 19 of Respondent's previous brief.

Absence of Federal Question

Petitioner has invoked the jurisdiction of this Court under *Title* 28 *U. S. C.*, Section 1257 (3).

The section invoked was derived from *old Title* 28 *U. S. C. A.*, Section 344. The decisions under that section clearly show that claims empowering the issuance of the writ of certiorari to a State Court "must be asserted at the proper time and in the proper manner by pleading, motion, or other appropriate action under the state system of pleading and practice, and upon the question whether such a claim has been so asserted, the decisions of the State Court is binding upon the Supreme Court when it is clear that such decision is not rendered in a spirit of evasion, for the purpose of defeating the claim of Federal Right." 54 *American Jurisprudence*, Section 243, p. 881. See also *Hartford Life Ins. Co.* v. *Johnson*, 249 U. S. 490; 63 *L. Ed.* 722; *A. C. L. R. R. Co.* v. *Mims*, 242 U. S. 532; 61 *L. Ed.* 476.

No claim is or could be made that the Georgia Court of Appeals in this case applied an extraordinary rule of construction or in any manner attempted to discriminate against this petitioner or his Federal rights.

No New Question

The Court has heretofore considered whether the state rules

of pleading construction constitute Federal Questions when there is no issue of discrimination nor intent to evade a Federal right.

The Court has long held that the construction of pleadings is in the absence of such an issue, a local question. This was the ruling of the Court in the case of *Isaac N. E. Allen* v. *Alleghany Co.*, 196 U. S. 458; 49 *L. Ed.* 551; there the Court ruled that a decision of the highest state court of New Jersey that a plea when construed most strongly against the pleader did not disclose a defense to a suit on a note, but involved a purely local question governed by the law of the forum. Of the plea the Court said:

> "Construing the third plea most strongly against the pleader, the conclusion was that it disclosed no defense in the action. This was purely a local question, and is not assignable as error here." (196 *U. S. at* 465.)

In a recent case involving the Federal Communications Act, this Court ruled that where the Supreme Court of Nebraska held that parties by their pleadings had conceded that the Federal Communications Commission had no jurisdiction of the controversy submitted to the State Court for decision, that this Court could not on certiorari determine the correctness of such holding. See *Radio Station WOW, Inc.* v. *Johnson*, 326 U. S. 120; 89 *L. Ed.* 2092. In that case, Mr. Justice Frankfurter also spoke for the Court of

> ". . . the well settled rule whereby this Court will not review a state Court decision resting on adequate and independent non-Federal grounds even though the State Court may have also summoned to its support an erroneous view of Federal Law."

The Decisions Under the Conformity Act

We do not contest the right of Congress to require State

Courts to try Federal Employer's Liability Act cases by any reasonable rule of procedure it may adopt. But in the absence of any such mandate from Congress, we assert that the Court has hitherto held that State rules of practice and procedure were to be applied in these cases. These matters of procedure include rules of construction of pleading, though of course they do not include the question of the sufficiency of pleadings, when construed, to state a cause of action. That the *rule* of pleading construction is a procedural matter can be nowhere better observed than in the judicial construction of the Old Conformity Act, *Title* 28 *U. S. C. A.*, Section 724. That Act declared:

> "The practice, pleadings and forms and modes of proceeding in civil causes . . ., shall conform, as near as may be, to the practice pleadings, and forms and modes of proceeding existing at the time in like cause is the courts of record of the State . . ."

Under the Act this Court has held:

> That the Federal Courts will follow a rule of construction in the State Courts, that where an answer sets up several distinct defenses, a denial in one is held to be qualified by an admission in another. *Northern Pac. R. Co.* v. *Payne*, 119 U. S. 561, 30 L. Ed. 513.

Also,

> That when a state code has relaxed the strictness of common law rules of pleading so that, instead of construing pleading strictly against the party, they are to be construed liberally in his favor, such a rule of construction will be observed in the U. S. Courts in that state. *U. S.* v. *Parker*, 120 U. S. 89; 30 L. Ed. 601.

See also *Connolly* v. *Std. Oil Co.*, 264 Fed. 383; *Bryson* v. *Gallo*, 180 Fed. 70.

If the matters of pleading construction were matters of form and procedure within the meaning of the Conformity Act, they are not otherwise in the case at Bar.

THE CASE PRESENTS NO CONFLICT WITH DECISIONS OF THIS COURT

The allegations of the petition in this record, construed according to unvarying Georgia Practice, present to the Court a case in which no negligence is charged.

Liability under the Federal Employer's Liability Act rests upon fault, that is upon defendant's negligence. See *Brady* v. *Southern Ry. Co.*, 320 U. S. 476, 88 L. Ed. 239. A defendant railroad is not negligent because a large clinker comes momentarily to rest in a railroad yard, without having been placed there by the defendant or its agent. No decision of this Court supports the contention that such allegations set forth a cause of action under the Federal Employer's Liability Act.

On the other hand, *Waller* v. *Northern Pacific Terminal Co. of Ore.*, 166 Pac. (2) 488, (Certiorari denied 329 *U. S.* 742; 67 *S. Ct.* 45,) supports our assertion that such facts do not constitute a cause of action. In the Waller case an employee allegedly slipped and fell on a stick in the terminal yards. There was a verdict and judgment for the plaintiff which the appellate court reversed because:

> "Assuming that the plaintiff slipped by stepping on a stick, there is not a scintilla of evidence to indicate how long the stick had been there. From all that appears from the evidence, it may have fallen from the train which the plaintiff was boarding." (See also our discussion of the Waller case, page 21 of previous brief of Respondent.)

We do not see how a discussion of the recent cases decided by this Court under the Federal Employer's Liability Act would be helpful in the disposition of this case. These recent cases were known and cited to the Georgia Courts which acknowledged their controlling effect. (R. 7.) But none of these cases make defendants insurers, see *Tiller v. A. C. L. R. Co.*, 318 U. S. 54; 87 *L. Ed.* 610. Furthermore, it has been thoroughly ac-

cepted by a majority of this Court that every claim does not present a jury question under the Act. See *Brady* v. *Sou. Ry. Co.*, 320 U. S. 476; 88 *L. Ed.* 239; *Hunter* v. *Texas Elec. Ry. Co.*, 332 U. S. 827; 92 *L. Ed.* 402; *Eckenrode* v. *Penn. R. Co.*, U. S. ; 93 *L. Ed.* 64; *Reynolds v. A. C. L. Ry. Co.*, U. S. ; 93 *L. Ed.* 475. (References to L. Ed. Advance Opinions.)

This Court has certainly adopted the principle that jury verdicts may be supported by certain inferences from evidence (*Lavender* v. *Kurn, supra.*), but it has never announced that State rules of pleading must be varied so as to permit pleading by inference contrary to state practice.

Indeed, we cannot find any decision of this Court with which the decision of the Georgia Court of Appeals is in conflict. The theory of cases cited by Petitioner have been dealt with at page 21 of Respondent's Brief heretofore filed in this cause.

Granting of the Writ

With great respect for the Court, we venture to submit that certiorari was, in this case, improvidently granted, and for that reason should now be dismissed. For that dismissal we move and show in connection with the motion, the following authority:

It has been several times held by this Court, that where the Court has granted certiorari, the same will, even after a consideration of the case on its merits, be dismissed as improvidently granted where it appears that no grounds existed for the original grant. See *Layne & Bowler Corp* v. *Western Well Works, Inc.*, 261 U. S. 387; 67 *L. Ed.*, 712; *United States* v. *Rimer, et al.*, 220 U. S. 547; 55 *L. Ed.* 578; *Furness, W. & Co.* v. *Yang-Tsze Ins. Asso.*, 242 U. S. 430; 61 *L. Ed.* 409.

The case presented by the Record herein is purely a matter involving "no more than its particular facts." (See the concurring opinion of Mr. Justice Frankfurter in *Wilkerson* v.

McCarthy, U. S. ; 93 *L. Ed.* 403. (Advance Opinions.)

The principle on which writs of certiorari have been granted by this Court was well stated by Mr. Chief Justice Taft in dismissing the improvidently granted writ in the *Layne & Bowler case, supra.*:

> "If it be suggested that as much effort and time as we have given to the consideration of the alleged conflict would have enabled us to dispose of the case before us on the merits, the answer is that it is very important that we be consistent in not granting the writ of certiorari except in cases involving principles the settlement of which is of importance to the public as distinguished from that of the parties, and in cases where there is a real and embarrassing conflict of opinion and authority between the circuit courts of appeal. The present case certainly comes under neither head." 67 L. Ed. 714.

See also the opinion of Mr. Justice Roberts, *Bailey* v. *Cent. Vt. R. Co.*, 319 U. S. 350; 87 *L. Ed.*, 1444 at 1448.

We assert that the construction given the particular language used by a particular counsel in a petition construed regularly according to the unvarying state practice in a State Court does not present to the Supreme Court of the United States any matter of public gravity or importance. Nor is there any principle of law announced in the decision which conflicts with the decisions of this Court or with the Courts which have generally construed the Federal Employers Liability Act. The one rule of substance announced by the decision is that liability under the Federal Employer's Liability Act must be based on some fault; and the one rule of practice is that the State Courts of Georgia construe pleadings against pleaders. Both of these rules are correct statements of law.

We call the Courts attention to the recent case *Chester Hedgebeth* v. *North Carolina*, 334 U. S. 806; 92 *L. Ed.*, 1739. In that case, this Court dealing with a case involving conviction

of robbery, wherein the 14th Amendment was invoked, and a man's liberty at stake, dismissed the writ of certiorari because the State Supreme Court "went on the ground that it did not have the full record before it" and therefore judgment below "can rest on a non-federal ground."

Judgment below on the Record now before the Court not only can but does most positively rest on a non-federal ground.

Conclusion

Whether the Court disposes of this case by dismissing the Writ or by considering the Record on its merits, we respectfully assert that this is a case for affirming the State Court decision. The principles of law announced in the decision were accurate, and indeed hardly questionable. The actual matter presented here involved the construction of pleadings in a petition. The State Court construed the pleadings by its unvarying rule. No charge is made that the Court attempted by its construction to evade a Federal right of petitioner. The question presented is therefore, non-federal.

In any event, the case involved only its particular facts.

We respectfully pray, therefore for an order dismissing the writ or sustaining the decision of the Georgia Court of Appeals.

Respectfully submitted,

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